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## **CIVIL SERVICE**

**STATESMAN, AUG 20, 2014**

### **Govt notifies change in CS prelims**

New Delhi, 20 August: The marks obtained for questions on English language comprehension skills, asked in second paper of the civil services (preliminary) examination, will not be included for grading, according to a notification issued by the Centre.

“The merit on the basis of preliminary examination shall be drawn using aggregate marks obtained in Paper-I out of 200 and marks obtained in Paper-II out of 200 minus the total of the marks allocated to the questions on English language comprehension skills,” the notification said.

There are two compulsory papers of 200 marks each in the civil services preliminary examination. These papers are also known as CSAT I and CSAT II.

This year's civil services preliminary examination is scheduled to be held on Sunday. The notification, issued by the Department of Personnel and Training, makes it clear for the candidates not to attempt nine questions of 22.5 marks asked in the English section of the prelims' second paper.

“Questions relating to English language comprehension skills of class X level, which are printed in English only, shall not be evaluated for gradation or merit and therefore, need not be attempted by the candidates,” it said.

A controversy had recently erupted over the pattern of civil services preliminary examination as students demanding change in the pattern of Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT), Paper II had taken to the streets waging a violent agitation.

Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh had on 4 August also said in the Parliament that English section marks will not be included for gradation or merit in civil services exam.

The CSAT-II paper carries questions on comprehension, interpersonal skills including communication skills, logical reasoning and analytical ability, decision-making and problem-solving, general mental ability, basic numeracy and English language comprehension skills (of Class X level).

**TRIBUNE, AUG 17, 2014**

### **Now, Haryana staff to retire at 60**

**Pradeep Sharma**

In a bid to beat anti-incumbency ahead of the Assembly elections in Haryana, Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda today unveiled a bonanza for the state government employees, which includes raising the retirement age from 58 to 60 years and 25 per cent hike in DA and full pension after 20 years' service.

Hooda's announcement came after he met representatives of the Haryana Karamchari Mahasangh and Sarv Karamchari Sangh a day before the state Cabinet meet.

The CM's announcement is being seen as another step to woo employees, who had been on warpath for several years.

"Fearing defeat in the upcoming elections, Hooda is desperately announcing populist decisions despite knowing that they cannot be implemented before the Assembly elections," BJP president Ram Bilas Sharma said.

Hooda said after 58 years of service, an employee would be asked whether he wanted to continue or retire and full pension would be paid after one completes 20 years of service instead of 28 years at present. "This will be effective with prospective effect from the date of notification," he said. He said a pay commission would be constituted to address "anomalies and deviations" that might have occurred while implementing the recommendations of the 6th Pay Commission.

A policy dated June 18 regarding regularisation of employees will also be made applicable to the ad hoc and daily wage employees who are similarly placed as contractual employees specified in the notification.

It was also decided that the demand for revising pay scales of CDPO and supervisors would be looked into by a committee headed by the Chief Secretary within three days. The state government also liberalised the policy for grant of advance for medical treatment as well as for reimbursement of medical bills. The policy would be circulated in all departments within three days for prompt implementation. Hooda said the state government had also decided in principle to end the contract system.

### **Hooda woos govt employees ahead of polls**

- \* Dearness allowance increased by 25%
- \* Full pension to employees after 20 years of service
- \* 6th Pay Commission 'anomalies' to be addressed
- \* Govt decides in principle to end contract system

## DEFENCE, NATIONAL

TRIBUNE, AUG 17, 2014

### **Govt relaxes reservation rules for jobs to ex-servicemen**

NEW DELHI: In what is welcome news for lakhs of ex-servicemen, the government has removed a major hurdle to their post-retirement employment and allowed them to avail of the benefit of reservation in all civil jobs they apply.

Upon discharge from the armed forces, an ex-serviceman normally applies for more than one job. However, in case of joining any civil employment due to early declaration of results or selection, the ex-serviceman is not entitled to the benefit of reservation for any subsequent job.

The issue that the rules were affecting the chances of ex-servicemen in getting suitable employment was brought to the notice of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), which held a consultation in the matter with the department of ex-servicemen in the Defence Ministry.

“It has now been decided that if an ex-serviceman applies for various vacancies before joining any civil employment, he can avail of the benefit of reservation as an ex-serviceman for any subsequent employment,” said a DoPT order.

However, to avail of this benefit, an ex-serviceman, as soon as he joins any civil employment, should submit a declaration or undertaking with the employer concerned about the date-wise details of application for various vacancies for which he has applied before joining the initial civil employment, it said.

This benefit would be available only in respect of vacancies which are filled on direct recruitment and wherever reservation applies to ex-servicemen, DoPT said, amending the government’s 24-year-old instructions in this regard.

There are about 20 lakh ex-servicemen, according to the Defence Ministry.

The benefit of reservation for ex-servicemen is available at 10 per cent of the vacancies in Group C posts and on 20 per cent of the vacancies in Group D posts in all central civil services and posts.

Benefit of reservation has been extended at 10 per cent of the vacancies in the posts up to the level of Assistant Commandant in all paramilitary forces which are filled by direct recruitment, according to the rules.

The government’s instructions issued on May 2, 1985, say that once an ex-serviceman has joined the government on the civil side, after availing of the re-employment benefits given to him as an ex-serviceman, his ex-serviceman status for the purpose of re-employment in government jobs would cease.

It was also decided that on his joining civil employment, he would be deemed to be a civil employee and would accordingly be entitled to only such benefits, like relaxation of age, etc., as open to civil employees in the normal course.

However, on November 7, 1989, it was clarified that the rules shall not apply to those ex-servicemen who have been re-employed or are re-employed by private companies, autonomous bodies, public sector undertakings and government offices on casual, contract or temporary ad-hoc basis and who can be removed from such service at any time by their employer. — PTI

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, AUG 21, 2013

**Column: Partisan Commission**

In his maiden Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi clearly indicated that the Planning Commission will cease to exist. It is likely to be replaced by a new institution with adequate representation to the states. Careful academic research has clearly shown that resource allocations made through the commission tend to have political overtones and favour states which are politically important to the ruling dispensation. Therefore, this is one measure about which even the opposition parties have little to complain about.

Stuti Khemani, who works with the development research group of the World Bank, in her scholarly article published in the *Journal of Development Economics*, investigates if the fiscal transfers made by the Centre via planning commission are politically motivated. She studies such transfers for a period spanning 23 years, between 1972 and 1995. Such transfers are extremely critical to the states because in the period under study, central government transfers constituted nearly a third of state revenue. Transfers made through the Plan panel constitute 6% of the total revenues of the states and 51% of the state borrowings. The paper shows that “affiliated states”, i.e., states ruled by the same party that rules at the central level, receive a higher proportion of the resources that are directed through the Planning Commission. Interestingly, states where the ruling party at the Centre enjoys a thin margin get an even higher proportion of resources. The difference pointed out by the author is approximately 30%, which is both economically and statistically significant. Some politically-important states, where the ruling party at the Centre faces stiff fight, receive upto 50% higher grants and loans.

To attribute any political motive and claim any kind of causality, one must clearly understand the institutional set up in India and also the econometric framework used. In India, the central government collects the bulk of the taxes. A large part of the state government expenditure is funded by general purpose transfers made by the Union government. Two institutions play a crucial role in determining the amount to be transferred to each state—Finance commission, a Constitutional body, and the Planning Commission, which is populated by political appointees. It is important to note that transfers done through the Planning Commission pertain to central government schemes such as universal education schemes, employment schemes, etc, which are well-advertised by the central government. People associate these schemes with the central government. In short, the central government has political axe to grind in these schemes.

One may still argue that the above finding could just be a co-incidence and resource allocation might have been actually efficient. To counter this argument, the paper looks at the transfers made by the Finance Commission. The Finance Commission is a Constitutional body entrusted with the responsibility of determining the basis for transfer of general revenues from the Centre to the States. The author does not find any bias in the transfers made using Finance Commission formulae. In fact, such allocations counter the effect of partisanship described above. Politically-affiliated states receive 30% lower grants from the Finance Commission. It is important to note that this finding, apart from confirming the robustness of the findings above, also points at the fact that Constitutional bodies in India have, in general, been impartial. It is also important to note that the study covers 23 long years which saw different parties at the Centre as well as states and almost all states swung from being affiliated states to non-affiliated status and vice-versa. The rich econometric specifications employed by the author exploit these variations and establish the main findings in a robust manner.

These findings are very believable given the findings of a number of earlier independent studies. Shawan Cole, of the Harvard University, has shown that lending by public-sector banks in India tends to be politically-motivated. He shows that agricultural lending goes up during election years and the increase is higher in “swing” constituencies. He also shows that such politically-motivated lending fails to improve productivity. My colleagues, Shashwat Alok and Meghana Ayyagiri, from the George Washington University, have shown that even capital expenditure decisions of the public sector enterprises tend to be politically-motivated. Several other studies have found similar results for other countries.

However, it is prudent to be cautious before assuming that political intervention is going to end. The Prime Minister has not yet spelled out the details of the new super-advisory to be set up to replace the Planning Commission. It is understandable that the Independence Day speech is hardly the occasion to spell out the details, but it is important to unearth the devil hidden in the details. Suppose, if a new set up, with practically similar functions as the Planning Commission, replaces the latter, then the results will not be any different. It could become the proverbial old wine in a new bottle, a refuge to the political refugees, who are likely to sing to the tune of the government in power. In contrast, if the new set up turns out to be an independent advisory group, then there is real hope of change.

Constitutional authorities in India such as the Election Commission, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and the Supreme Court have established their credibility as neutral arbitrators in their respective domains, stray allegations notwithstanding. I

recommend that the Finance Commission be given a larger role in determining the resource-allocation formula and the new body replacing the Planning Commission play a purely advisory role. If the government's intentions are clear, then this a great move towards strengthening federal structure of our country.

Prasanna Tantri

The author works for Center For Analytical Finance, Indian School of Business

**Editorial: Planning Commission, RIP**

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, AUG 21, 2013

Now that prime minister Narendra Modi has officially pronounced the Planning Commission dead and is crowdsourcing ideas on what its replacement should look like, there is a host of comments on how it is a bad idea to junk the plan panel while there is no clarity on its eventual replacement. Among the more serious objections to winding up the plan panel is that this will take away the much-needed flexibility to central finances. Central to the idea of abolishing the Planning Commission is that states get more flexibility in using funds through automatic devolution of tax collections—so, in a period when economic growth and tax collections are down, this does reduce the Centre's flexibility to slash expenditures. There is also the argument that not all states have the same ability to manage funds or execute projects so, were they to be given more funds through the automatic route, there is no guarantee they will spend it well in the absence of a central oversight mechanism. Related to this is the issue of elite capture, obviously easier at the level of the states, and the fact that states have not devolved power to the third tier of government—so where is the guarantee the money will even get spent on projects that people need?

In a nutshell, the argument is that the plan panel has a relevance—for perspective planning, as an independent arbiter on inter-ministerial wrangles, as a repository of good practices including creating viable and fair PPP frameworks, etc—so just tweak its functions and let it carry on. Indeed, since there is clearly a need for a US-style Congressional Budget Office that is independent of the finance ministry to give a non-partisan impact assessment of tax/non-tax policies, this is also a role the new panel can perform. With more money flowing directly to states, there is a greater need to track the efficacy of public spending, a role ideally suited for the panel or its Independent Evaluation Office. Before state and local governments are ready to spend money, a lot of capacity building also needs to be done to ensure those given more freedom are in a position to do something with it.

Whatever shape the plan panel's successor takes, it has to be ensured the new body does not remain as much a symbol of central oppression as its predecessor. While the plan panel had several redeeming features, it cannot be denied it has been used as a tool of favouritism over the years. A study by Stuti Khemani of the World Bank had shown that, during 1972-95, states run by parties that were allies of the Centre typically received transfers that were 4-18% more than the average for 15 major states. Plan transfers for these states were 10-30% higher. A similar analysis by Govinda Rao and Nirvikar Singh found grants for state plans—these comprise around a fifth of all transfers from the Centre—were around 30% higher for ally states. Between FY01 and FY13, apart from the obvious weavers' and Bundelkhand-type packages, the ultra discretionary Special Plan Assistance and Special Central Assistance have risen from 5.9% of central assistance to state Plans to 16.5%. Such central government policing, it has to be said, is anathema to the concept of federalism.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, AUG 21, 2013

**Column: Chinese planning lessons for Modi**

The National Development Reforms Commission (NDRC) in China seems to have influenced Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to replace the Planning Commission with a similar body. Before such an entity is up and running, it is useful to take a closer look at the influencing agency itself.

The NDRC in China replaced the State Planning Commission from 2003. It has since functioned as a macroeconomic management agency, reporting directly to the Chinese State Council. The Commission performs a huge array of functions across twenty-six departments. In this respect, it is almost as large and diverse as India's Planning Commission that has thirty-one departments.

The NDRC is organised into departments reflecting strategic priorities of the Chinese government such as regional economy, rural economy, climate change, fiscal and financial affairs, laws and regulations, policy studies and economic reforms. While some of these reflect the sectoral priorities of the Indian Planning Commission too, the NDRC has much greater thrust on industry and investment, which is evident from its divisions on industry, basic industry, hi-tech industry, fixed asset investment and foreign capital and overseas investment. Along with industry and investment, the NDRC is equally focused on regional development through the departments of regional economy, western region and northeastern region. Resource conservation and climate change are its other major priority. Unlike India's Planning Commission, it has a specific division on prices.

Interestingly, the NDRC does not focus on health and education, at least not through separate divisions. Nor does it, in any way, act as an interface between the Centre and the provinces, as the Planning Commission does. But it has extensive review and approval powers, particularly for industrial investment proposals.

Apart from the obviously larger focus on industry, investment, macroeconomic policies (including reforms) and emerging issues (climate change, regional disparities), the NDRC China has three major functions. All these three functions set it apart from the Planning Commission.

First, the NDRC is the key agency in deciding the country's strategic policies on natural resources. The National Energy Administration (NEA) is located in the NDRC. The NEA not only formulates energy development plans and policies, it also contributes substantively to R&D activities in the energy sector as well as taking the lead in fixing energy pricing and finance. The NDRC also manages China's strategic petroleum reserves. In addition to energy, the State Grain Administration in the NDRC prepares policies for long-term macro-management of grains in the Chinese economy including grain storage, procurement, distribution, and pricing, as well as administering quality standards. The third resource management role of the NDRC is in formulating policies for mobilizing strategic material resources for China.

The second function of the NDRC, larger and more exhaustive than the plan panel's, is in its international cooperation agenda. The NDRC has the responsibility of working on not only institutional foreign collaborations, but also fostering economic diplomacy by guiding Chinese embassies on various economic matters and providing the economic perspective on foreign affairs. This unique and under-discussed role of the NDRC makes it a critical actor in China's global commercial diplomacy.

Finally, the NDRC acts as a bridge between macroeconomic policies and their effective communication to the top brass of the Communist Party of China (CPC). This is done through the NDRC's leadership team comprising the chairperson, seven vice-chairpersons (including five minister-level appointees), senior supervisory commissioner, members, secretary general and deputy secretary generals. Other than the leadership, the NDRC has total staff strength of around 900.

Over the little more than ten years that it has been around, the NDRC has assumed enormous control over the Chinese economy. Widely touted as China's 'economic policy factory', the NDRC is the country's most powerful economic agency with the authority to

have almost the last word on macroeconomic policies and economic reforms. Almost because, China's top decision-making authority—the Central Politburo Standing Committee of the CPC—including the Chinese President and the Premier, has the final say on policies. But the strong integration between the CPC's top leadership and that of the NDRC has entrenched the strategic influence of the Commission.

The NDRC's enormous clout has had its downsides. The new Chinese leadership, under President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, has actively encouraged internal reforms for the NDRC, to cut its review and approval authority and increasing the policy content. Clearly, the Commission has outgrown its mandate. Rather than encouraging growth of market behaviour, it was retarding it through an overarching regulatory sweep.

India's effort to establish an alternative to the plan panel has a few lessons to pick up from the Chinese experience. The first is in the degree of strategic and functional importance of the agency. The NDRC's importance, in this regard, has been massive. Granting similar authority to the Indian body would imply making it more powerful than most ministries, probably second only to the PMO. Without such power, however, it might just become an advisory body with notional significance such as the Economic Advisory Councils to the Prime Minister.

The second important decision would be in fixing the ambit of the agency. It might be asked to prepare the vision for the country's macroeconomic policy framework; within the framework, it needs to identify priorities. Making an Indian NDRC work on every aspect of the economy would be a futile exercise. There must be clear priorities in this regard.

With the Prime Minister seeking suggestions on the mandate and constitution of the body, it would be good to keep the Chinese experience in mind: both the upsides and downsides.

Amitendu Palit

The author is Head (Partnerships & Programme) and Senior Research Fellow with the Institute of South Asian Studies in the National University of Singapore. He can be reached at [isasap@nus.edu.sg](mailto:isasap@nus.edu.sg). Views are personal

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 19, 2014

**The new plan body must have a certain oomph**

**Abhijit Banerjee**

Call me sentimental. The first time I went to the Planning Commission was when it was under KC Pant, a long time ago. Since then I have been back there many, many times to the point where the many people who seem to spend their lives sitting outside the various offices and even the patches of grime in the hallways and stairwells began to look familiar. I will miss it when it's not there anymore.

I see the reasons why the government wants it gone. A lot has changed since 1950: We are liberalised now, placing our faith in the wisdom of the market over that of the State.

Equally important, we are much more federal as a nation, relying more on state governments to provide us with direction.

Our states have more expertise and more confidence in their different ways of doing things than they did in 1950 (though I wish I could say that we have a more competent set of leaders).

In all of this I can see how the Commission may end up being a slightly overbearing presence, demanding compliance to some grand plan that does not pay enough respect to the different ambitions and issues that animate the individual states.

This is what, I believe, drew that famously testy response from Narendra Modi when he was chief minister of Gujarat.

But the production and enforcement of five-year plans is only one of the many functions that the Commission has served over the recent past.

First, there is the economic analyst function, what the Congressional Budget Office does in the US: Someone needs to think through important shifts in policy and their consequences carefully.

I am unhappy that Modi did not use his honeymoon to get rid of fuel subsidies, but the one explanation that I find somewhat reassuring is that he did not want to act in haste — eliminating the subsidies is easy, but dealing with happens after is not.

The right strategy almost surely is to combine the announcement of the elimination of the fuel subsidy with the announcement of a new income subsidy programme for the poor that is cheaper, less distorting and better targeted.

But to do that, someone would have had to think through the entire design of the new programme.

If the government was flush with good economists, these responsibilities could perhaps be handled by the economists in the relevant ministries. But it is not: A joke making the rounds in Delhi last month is that finance minister Arun Jaitley was so short-handed at the ministry of finance that he asked P Chidambaram to do the budget for him.

Given how hard it is to recruit high quality economists into the government, the strategy of using the prestige associated with being a member of the Commission to create a crack economic team within the government makes a lot of sense.

Modi says that he will replace the Commission with a think tank. I can imagine a think tank that plays this role, but it will take some doing to attract high-quality people to work for it.

There is also a role for asking tough questions: The PM wants every family to have two bank accounts, but what is the evidence about how much those accounts will get used? And given that what will be the net cost of this programme? Is there a better way to use that money? A think tank could ask these questions, but would they dare, if it requires coming up against the PM? I am not remotely implying that every Commission member has always been able to stand up to higher authorities.

But the long established protocols of communication between the Commission, the ministries and media must make it easier for it to deliver an unwanted message and moreover, the public status of its members probably makes it harder for a minister to intimidate them for bringing up a piece of unhelpful evidence.

And what if there is no reliable evidence? The think tank would need to have enough credibility (both in terms of neutrality and competence) that its judgment about the evidence would be trusted, enough clout that they would be able to stare down a ministry that is all fired up to go and the resources and the skill to go out and generate the necessary evidence by collecting data and conducting rigorous experiments.

The same goes, of course, for programmes that have already been scaled up; it is just harder, since programmes create their own constituencies.

But if the programme cannot be shut down whatever the evidence, perhaps it can be tweaked to work better? The officials in line ministries are supposed to do this, but do they have the competence or the right incentives? It is a rare minister, at least in India, who encourages his staff to stick their neck out.

These are all the reasons why the previous government set up the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) and placed it under the Commission to give it some political weight. I am sure a new home will be found for the IEO, but it's vital that it has the political clout and the independence from the line ministries.

Finally to the extent that there was one, the Commission served as the institutional base for the much-needed crosscutting innovations in government.

For example, take malnutrition: I was once put in the awkward position of chairing a meeting on this at the Commission, where there were senior representatives from at least five ministries — maternal and child welfare, food, water and sanitation, health and education (because of the school meals).

The only thing they all agreed upon was that the core problem was poverty and so outside all of their particular domains.

How many think tank members will have the political influence (or oomph) to get past their carefully constructed defences and get them all talking about how to solve the problem? I certainly did not.

(Abhijit Banerjee is Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics and Director, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, MIT. The views expressed by the author are personal.)

TELEGRAPH, AUG 17, 2014

### **ONE DINO DOWN**

#### **Jurassic plan panel set to be replaced**

**New Delhi, Aug. 16:** The Narendra Modi government plans to transform the Soviet-era Planning Commission into a Chinese-style National Development Reforms Commission.

The proposed commission will act not only as an economic and human development think tank but also as a body that plans and monitors the implementation of mega projects and industrial areas, liaising with state governments to get the projects up and running within a timeframe.

Modi feels the plan panel — a Jurassic-era relic of the command economy — has outlived its utility in the new age where the larger chunk of the economy is in private hands, and where the State's role is that of a catalyst rather than a Soviet-style target setter.

“Sometimes it costs more to repair the old house but it gives us no satisfaction. Thereafter, we have a feeling that it would be better to construct a new house altogether and therefore, within a short period, we will replace the Planning Commission with a new institution having a new design and structure, a new body, a new soul, a new thinking, a new direction...,” Modi said in his Independence Day speech on Friday.

The Planning Commission, set up through a government resolution in 1950 when Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister, can be dismantled through an executive order.

The Planning Commission's primary role was to allocate resources to the Centre and states. But over the years, the states had become disconnected from the central planning process. The panel originally started out by devising five-year plans but over time it became fixated on the breakdown of the plan into annual components — and refused to hunker down for consultations with the states.

Officials said that though Modi had yet not spelt out the contours of the new body he had in mind, he had been seeking inputs to determine what form the entity should take. Sources said he had revealed some of his own ideas during conversations he had had with Planning Commission officials in the past.

The main job of the new body will be to act as a think tank — strategising economic and human development projects like “toilets in every Indian home” and plans to buy up energy assets abroad, and persuading Japanese, Chinese and Korean businesses to shift their manufacturing bases from high-cost China to India.

He would also like the new entity to act like a development bank’s economic planning wing — costing, vetting and monitoring mega-projects such as smart cities, inter-linking of rivers, and building a chain of river ports, international railway lines and expressways linking India with its neighbours and with Southeast Asia.

It would also work in tandem with ministries and states on the nitty-gritty of getting mega-industrial clusters off the ground through effective coordination as well as regional development projects such as those meant to come up in Naxalite-affected states.

The function of allocating monies to fund states’ development plans as additional central assistance or for developing hilly or border areas will go to the finance ministry’s expenditure department.

Such allocations are usually made by central finance ministries in most federal governments around the world, such as Canada, and officials feel that the Planning Commission would be better off shedding this responsibility.

During his visits to China, Modi had interacted with the Chinese development reforms body and was apparently impressed by what he saw.

His new development body will be loosely based on the Chinese model but with some subtle differences. Unlike the Chinese body, it will not do any strict target-setting though it will give indicative targets on diverse issues like electricity generation and the amount of coal that ought to be mined.

It will monitor macroeconomic and social development trends and provide forecasts, warning and information guidance. Though this will mean, in some senses, replicating the work of the chief economic adviser in the finance ministry, officials say it would have a “broader perspective and fit in with Modi’s scheme of getting advisory inputs on an issue from multiple sources”.

The issue of reforming the Planning Commission after India’s initial burst of reforms in the 1990s had been raised in Parliament during the short-lived United Front government and then during the NDA rule. The Planning Commission was seen as a convenient parking slot for politicians waiting for better appointments and have-been bureaucrats. But it continued to have some utility for the government of the day.

Many chief ministers, including Modi, have sparred with the plan panel while finalising their annual plans. They were resentful that the officials of the plan panel were caught in a time warp and adopted a patronising air reminiscent of the Nehruvian era and didn’t

## SEVEN VOWS

*The seven-point brief given to the Planning Commission when it was formed in 1950*

seem to be working with the state governments to resolve funding tangles and seemed to be more intent in nit-picking with the states' plans.

Officials said Modi had at many meetings emphasised that the plan body needed to “interact with his officials through the year to work out development plans and streamline central clearances for ambitious port and highway projects”. It was obvious that Modi felt the centralised planning model first mooted by P.C. Mahalanobis was a relic that India could well do without.

- Assess the material, capital and human resources of the country and investigate the possibilities of augmenting deficient resources

- Formulate a plan for the most effective and balanced use of resources

- Define the stages in which the plan should be carried out and propose the allocation of resources

- Indicate the factors that retard economic development and determine the conditions for the plan's successful execution

- Determine the nature of the machinery which will be necessary for securing the successful implementation of each stage of the plan

- Appraise the progress achieved in executing each stage of the plan and recommend required policy adjustments

- Recommend the interim or ancillary steps needed to discharge the commission's duties or to address problems referred to it by the Centre or the states

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 21, 2014

**Nitin Desai:** RIP Planning Commission

**The Planning Commission has not been central to the policymaking process since the mid-1960s**

Nitin Desai

In his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) announced the end of the Planning Commission. There will be few mourners at its funeral, mainly old war horses like me. So this is in the nature of an obituary for an institution in which I served

for a decade and a half, and where I learnt to understand the complexities of India's political economy.

When the Commission was launched in 1950, it was basically Jawaharlal Nehru's instrument for providing a coherent vision for the development actions of the central and state governments. Along with his letters to the chief ministers, it was also an instrument for high-level policy education. In those days, it attracted some of the best economic brains from India and around the world to its portals, and for several decades every [Indian economist](#) of note was associated with the Commission in one capacity or another.

Twice in its long history, the Commission put its stamp on development policy - first in the 1950s and then in the mid-1960s.

In the fifties, P C Mahalanobis and Pitambar Pant were the ones who articulated development strategy - the former with his machines-to-make-machines strategy of priority for heavy industry, and the latter with the preparation of long-term perspectives for development that provided a quantitative framework for macro-policy and sectoral target-setting. Many economists have criticised this as a mistaken import substitution policy. But this planning approach was formulated at a time when Europe and Japan were still in the throes of recovery from the war, and the prospects for export-led growth did not look promising even to the Indian economists who put forward a wage goods-oriented development strategy.

The achievements of this phase of planning in terms of capacity building are substantial. Apart from the steel plants and heavy machinery factories, these years saw the establishment of the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management, the commissions for atomic energy and space, the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research labs and much more that is the basis for the scientific and technical capacities that underlie today's success stories. Nor was this capacity building confined to the urban industrial sector. The system of agricultural research and extension, the expansion of the rural credit network, and community development were also all started in this phase.

The second time the [Planning Commission](#) made a real difference was in the mid-1960s, when, with the emergence of non-[Congress](#) governments in some states, the discretionary system of state Plan financing faced political problems. This is when the Planning Commission, a little distant from the pressures of competitive politics, could and did

come up with a solution in the shape of the Gadgil formula of central Plan assistance to the states.

There was a third time when the Commission looked like playing a seminal role in shaping development policy: that was in the early 1970s, when Indira Gandhi went in for a leftist policy of bank nationalisation, monopoly control, state trading in foodgrain, etc. The instigators of this policy were more her kitchen cabinet - though, from Yojana Bhavan, D P Dhar and Sukhamoy Chakravarty did play an important role. But this phase of policy did not last very long, and by 1975, the rollback from leftist policies started and gathered pace after Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980.

The missed opportunity was in the 1960s, when the boom in world trade greatly improved the advantages of export-led growth. Unfortunately, two wars, two severe droughts, the loss of two prime ministers and the conflicts within the Congress led to a loss of policy coherence as the government coped with the basics of survival.

Since then the Commission has played a relatively low-key role, working within the interstices of the dense structure of the sectoral ministries to influence policy. I was personally associated with the division that appraised public investment projects, mainly to assist the finance ministry in its responsibilities for project approval and indirectly to orient public investment projects towards efficiency, equity and environmental protection.

There were other attempts like the brave effort at reorienting agricultural planning around agro-climatic zones that my friend, Yoginder Alagh, pushed. A more recent instance is the role of the Planning Commission in promoting public-private partnerships in infrastructure and galvanising infrastructure development, where its role was openly criticised by at least one senior minister.

The fact is that the policy revolution of 1991 rendered obsolete much of the methodology of planning that had evolved over decades and gotten congealed in the minds and working practices of Yojana Bhavan. Quantitative targeting of domestic production became irrelevant with delicensing of production and trade; approval and monitoring of public investment became problematic with the growing integration of the public sector into the market economy. Moreover, with the growth of competitive populism, public spending shifted away from investments in the productive economy to social welfare doles.

The role of the Planning Commission in federal finance also declined. The allocative

power shifted to the loose confederation of sectoral ministries with the proliferation of centrally sponsored schemes, which are in essence conditional transfers of resources to the states. The block Plan finance grants became a very small part of the Budgets in the more prosperous states. Chief ministers like Narendra Modi saw little value in state Plan discussions - and resented the implicit erosion of federalism.

The status and the role of the Planning Commission has been the subject of debate for several decades now. Attempts to reorient it have usually characterised the start of every new regime at least from the early 1970s. Yet after Nehru, no prime minister has reposed faith in the capacity of the Planning Commission to guide development. Even in the United Progressive Alliance, it was the personal relationship between Montek Singh Ahluwalia and Manmohan Singh that mattered rather than an institutional linkage between [Yojana Bhavan](#) and the Prime Minister's Office.

In Mr Modi, we have a prime minister who is capable of imposing his vision of development on the sectoral ministries and the states. The new institution to replace the Planning Commission will be shaped by him and will carry the clout that Nehru's Planning Commission had. If this clout is combined with a clear public vision of development, then we will be back to the halcyon days of the 1950s when the government did something innovative month after month.

STATESMAN, AUG 22, 2014  
**Planning for federal India**  
Rajinder Puri

Speaking from the Red Fort on Independence Day, Prime Minister (PM) Mr Narendra Modi announced that the Planning Commission will be abolished, to be replaced by a new institution more in keeping with current times. According to media reports, the new institution will be called the States Reform and Development Commission. The PM said: "If we have to take India forward, then states will have to be taken forward. The importance of federal structure is more important today than it was 60 years ago... We will try very soon to set up a new institution in place of the Planning Commission." The PM said that soon a move will be initiated to start the process of change, which might take some time to fructify. The Planning Commission formulates Five Year Plans which are approved by the government and which then set the nation's economic policy. The Five Year Plans and Annual Plans are formulated after Commission members consult Central ministers and state governments. The Commission is an advisory body for the Central government. The Commission is entrusted to assess all human, capital and technical resources available and then formulate plans for their optimal use to address economic and social priorities. This system was inspired by the Soviet Union model of centralised planning. Often, decisions of the Commission invite criticism. Currently the

Commission has been roundly criticised for overspending on renovating two blocks of toilets. It has also been condemned for declaring a low and unrealistic poverty threshold. What shape will the proposed new institution take? It is likely that time-bound plans may altogether be dispensed with. Instead indicative planning may be introduced that offers continuous guidelines on the basis of prevalent social and economic trends. This idea is not new. Decades ago, Swatantra Party leaders had suggested this as an alternative to Five Year Plans.

According to the government, the new institution will induct representatives from the states to offer suggestions which will make it more inclusive and federal in approach. Will it? Practically, will it not be ultimately another body seeking approval of the Central government? How will that ensure genuine federalism?

If the government seeks a federal approach to development, it would be well advised to invoke Article 263 of the Constitution and establish, in addition to the proposed new institution, the Inter-State Council which has remained for six decades a neglected dead letter. The Article states that the President may at any time, for public interest, establish this Council which would intercede in disputes between states or between the Centre and all states. It would also be charged with making “recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action with respect to the subject”. The suggestions of the new proposed institution could be debated and approved by the Inter-State Council. That would ensure more genuine federalism than by merely creating an advisory body which recruits members from states. If the PM really seeks a federal approach, should he not also establish the Inter-State Council?

The writer is a veteran journalist and cartoonist. He blogs at [www.rajinderpuri.com](http://www.rajinderpuri.com)

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 22, 2014

**Arvind Subramanian likely to be chief economic advisor  
Post vacant since Raghuram Rajan resigned almost a year before**

Noted economist [Arvind Subramanian](#) is favoured as the choice for the government’s [Chief Economic Advisor](#) (CEA). It has been vacant since [Raghuram Rajan](#) resigned almost a year before, to become governor of the Reserve Bank.

His name is learnt to have gone to the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet for approval.

Subramanian is presently a senior fellow, Peterson Institute for International Economics

and Centre for Global Development, based in the US. In 2011, Foreign Policy magazine had named him one of the world's top 100 global thinkers.

He was earlier assistant director in the research department of the International Monetary Fund. He had served at the GATT (1988–92) during the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations and taught at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government (1999–2000) and at Johns Hopkins' School for Advanced International Studies (2008–10).

His works have been published widely in dailies, and in academic and other journals. He has also written extensively in this newspaper.

If selected, he will head a team of economic advisors who bring out the government's annual Economic Survey. The latest one, for 2013-14, has already been issued, coordinated by principal advisor Ila Patnaik.

The team headed by the [CEA](#) also pens a mid-year analysis of the economy, presented in the winter session of Parliament.

The CEA basically heads the economic division and Indian Economic Service division in the finance ministry.

The main activities here include monitoring macro economic trends and policy issues. With larger economic growth expected to only gradually recover this financial year from sub-five per cent in 2012-13 and 2013-14, and inflation still to show a consistent pattern of a decline, Subramanian will have no shortage of work.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 19, 2014

**PM Modi invites ideas from people on new plan body**  
**Saubhadra Chatterji/ Chetan Chauhan**

Four days after announcing that he would scrap the planning commission, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday threw it open to people to suggest ideas on the shape of the panel's replacement, inviting mixed responses to the move.

The move is seen as a part of his efforts to strengthen government-people relations and a section of the establishment feels the prime minister, who puts a premium on out-of-the-box ideas, may already have some big-ticket plan in mind, but wants to gauge people's mood first.

Modi announced in his Independence Day speech that the 64-year-old Soviet-style commission would be replaced with a new institution, but did not spell out any details.

“Inviting you to share your ideas on what shape the new Institution to replace the Planning Commission can take,” the Prime Minister tweeted Tuesday. “We envision the proposed Institution as one that caters to the aspirations of 21st century India & strengthens participation of the States,” he added in another tweet.

The move evoked mixed reactions, with most experts seeking a revamped panel instead of a totally new body.

Sayeeda Hamid, a panel member during the UPA regime, said changing the name will not make any difference until the government learns from the “good work” done by the commission.

“The new body should adopt the consultative process that was started by the commission,” she said. “One cannot develop a prospective plan without talking to non-government organisations.”

Former planning commission secretary NC Saxena said he was worried about the future of the 1,000 people who were employed with the panel and the disbursement of money to state governments. “The new body will have to have the basic elements of the planning commission,” he added.

Ajay Chhibber, head of the Independent Evaluation Office that was set up last year to look at the commission’s functioning, in June recommended scrapping it, saying it was “beyond repair” and suggested setting up a body, which can foster ideas for implementation across India.

He said that disbursement of funds could be given to the finance ministry and the finance commission, which can be a permanent body in the new system.

## **EDUCATION**

STATESMAN, AUG 20, 2014

### **Will try to get civil defence subject in school textbooks: HM**

New Delhi, 20 August: The Home Ministry will take the initiative to introduce civil defence as a subject in school textbooks and curriculum to inculcate knowledge of this important life-saving skill in young minds.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh today said he would write to the Human Resource Development ministry to include the civil defence course in the curriculum. “It is important that children have the required set of skills in this area,” Mr Singh said as he formally sanctioned a new Rs 290.89 crore scheme for civil defence works. The minister, while speaking at an event of the central government's civil defence, home guards and fire services department said, he would also take it up with the Finance Ministry to increase the funds for these units setup at all levels including in the states. The scheme, unveiled by Mr Singh, is called 'Mainstreaming Civil Defence in Disaster Risk Reduction' and it will be implemented in 32 states and Union Territories during the 12th Five Year plan.

Describing the civil defence and home guard personnel as those who evoke “confidence” amongst the citizens, the minister said it was necessary to strengthen and make effective this department as he observed that these vital departments were not getting their due and the required respect in the public domain.

Mr Singh recalled his younger days to say that civil defence volunteers used to be an essential feature before, during and in the aftermath of a disaster or any man-made or natural challenge.

“I know the resources are limited ~ but I myself will talk and write to the Finance Ministry to make this organisation more effective,” he said. The Home Minister said he would take a look at the problems being faced by the civil defence personnel, home guards and fire services staff with regard to emoluments, incentives, allowances and existing vacancies.

Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijju said the country and all stakeholders need to “uplift and scale up operations in this direction” and for all subjects under civil defence. During the event, the Director General for civil defence, home guards and fire services RR Verma flagged various issues being faced by the organisation that became part of the Union government and Home Ministry in 1941.

STATESMAN, AUG 22, 2014

### **IIT - Kharagpur lock horns with UGC**

The University Grants Commission and IIT Kharagpur are locked in a tussle following a gazette notification issued by UGC regarding degrees offered by universities. IIT Kharagpur, however, maintained that it is governed by its own Act, Institutes of Technology Act.

The notification dated 5 July asked universities to have degrees that are “generally recognised, globally acknowledged and widely accepted”. On 12 July, it was followed up with letters to the IITs, including IIT Kharagpur.

The director of IIT Kharagpur, in his letter to the Human Resource Development Ministry, said the UGC letter has come as a surprise because IITs are not governed by the UGC Act but by the Act of Parliament and IIT Council, the IITs are empowered to frame ‘courses of study’ without the need to seek approval of the UGC. He said there is some confusion within the UGC regarding the autonomy and powers of the IITs to institute their own degrees and courses of study. He has requested the HRD ministry to clarify this to the UGC.

The HRD ministry has taken the stand that the UGC Act, 1956, is as much an Act of Parliament as is the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961. Seeking to resolve the matter, the HRD ministry has observed that the provisions of the UGC Act 1956 and IIT Act 1961 are to be construed in a harmonious manner rather than to the exclusion of the other.

“The exact mismatch between IIT Kharagpur degrees and the UGC specified degrees may have to be reviewed jointly by IIT Kharagpur and UGC and an appropriate solution worked out considering the student interests at stake,” said the HRD ministry.

## ELECTIONS

TELEGRAPH, AUG 20, 2014

### THE GOVERNING OPTION

**Where the AAP failed, and where the Left can yet succeed**

Prabhat Patnaik

A remarkable result was thrown up in the recent Lok Sabha elections by the Mumbai North East constituency: Medha Patkar, perhaps the best-known 'civil society' activist of the country, who was contesting on an Aam Aadmi Party ticket there, lost her deposit. This was particularly striking because Maharashtra is her home state, Marathi is her mother tongue, and Mumbai a metropolis where people are likely to have read and known about her struggles.

Lest it be thought that her poor performance was because the main location of her struggle was far from Mumbai, it is worth noting that S.P. Udayakumar, the leader of the mass agitation against the Kudankulam nuclear plant, which had attracted the entire country's attention, also contested the election on an AAP ticket from Tamil Nadu, and also lost his deposit.

This does not, in my view, indicate any lack of respect for these activists, or lack of sympathy for their struggles. I do not believe that Medha Patkar would not command the respect of a sixth of those casting their votes in Mumbai North East (which is the proportion of votes required for saving the deposit); she undoubtedly would, and profound respect at that. What the result indicates is that people draw a distinction between a worthy leader of a *movement* and a candidate who provides a *governing option*, and vote only for the latter.

This phenomenon has been visible in other countries for a long time. For instance, in the old days, when the Communist Party was a force in Britain, it was very common for workers to choose communists to lead their trade unions since they had the reputation of being tough, honest, and uncompromising on workers' interests; but the same workers would never vote for the Communist Party in the general elections, and preferred Labour Party candidates instead. They respected communists in the trade union movement but did not consider them a 'governing option'.

In India, by contrast, the communists have been seen, in some parts of the country, not just as constituting a movement, but also as a governing option. But, curiously, not in other parts. In Tamil Nadu for instance, where the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has more than a lakh of members (the largest number it has after Kerala and West Bengal), where party branches exist in almost every village, and where the party has played a major role in the socio-cultural life of the state, leading powerful agitations not just in the economic but also in the social sphere (including recently against the "two glass system" in local tea and coffee shops

which is a hangover from the days of “untouchability”), it fares poorly in elections, except when it is in alliance with one or the other of the Dravidian parties. People may respect or join its movements, but do not consider it a governing option.

Why do people consider some parties as providing a governing option and not others? Or, since, barring a few cases where parties have been formed by important film-stars using the ‘fan club’ chain, most major parties have emerged from movements of one kind or the other (including fascist movements), why do some movements make a transition to being governing options but not others?

Fortuitous circumstances certainly play a role in such transitions. In 1977, for instance, if the Janata Party had not rejected the request of the Left Front, by then greatly weakened by the semi-fascist terror it faced in the 1970s, for 100 seats under a seat-sharing agreement in West Bengal, forcing the Front to fight on its own in a triangular contest in which it went on to win three-quarters of the seats, it is a moot point if the Left would have emerged as a governing option in the state. In the opposite case, if the Left parties had not insisted on a large number of seats in their negotiations with N.T. Rama Rao for an electoral understanding in Andhra Pradesh, which had once been a Left bastion but by then had ceased to be so, and had settled for fewer seats to preserve the alliance, the Left would have fared much better, and might have succeeded in re-emerging as a governing option in that state. Even Rama Rao’s own essay in politics, which did not come out of any mass movement, might have remained a still-born one if Rajiv Gandhi had not publicly humiliated the previous chief minister, T. Anjaiah, and Indira Gandhi had not unceremoniously dismissed him, hurting Telugu pride in the process.

But leaving aside such fortuitous circumstances, and even assuming that the electorate actually gives a particular political party that has emerged out of a movement the mandate to govern, *that party itself has to make a transition from being only a movement to being a governing option.* This is precisely what the AAP did not do when given the chance; not surprisingly, it was rejected comprehensively in the Lok Sabha elections as a governing option. Whether it makes this transition in the future is besides the point; *the transition itself is difficult since it carries with it the risk of compromising on principles.*

To say that the transition entails a *risk* of compromise is not to say that a compromise is *inevitable*. To ensure that a compromise is *not* made in the transition from a movement to a governing option, it is necessary that the political party’s *theoretical* comprehension is carried to a much higher level.

This statement may appear odd at first sight. It is common to see participation in a movement, or leadership over it, as being informed by a theoretical understanding, while being a governing option requires the art of practical politics that is devoid of any theory. ‘Purity’ based on theory in short (or what is commonly referred to as ‘principles’) is contrasted with ‘practical politics’ that is inevitably seen as requiring all sorts of opportunistic compromises (or an abandonment of ‘principles’).

But making this distinction itself is what lies at the root of the problem. It is not ‘practical politics’ *per se* that necessarily entails an abandonment of ‘principles’; it is ‘practical politics’ uninformed by ‘theory’ that entails this. As the philosopher, Georg Lukács, had once remarked: “[T]he highest level of development of theory is when theory bursts into practice.” If theory is not developed to that level, when practice (or ‘practical politics’) instead becomes purely *ad hoc* and purely empirical, only then does such practice degenerate into unprincipled opportunism.

Developing theory to the requisite level, to be sure, is not easy, which is why ‘civil society’ organizations prefer to remain ‘pure’, prefer to keep their theoretical endeavour to fairly rudimentary levels, and prefer to rest content with leading movements that never throw up any governing options. One problem with movements that neither themselves make the transition to becoming a governing option, nor have any explicit strategy of forging links with some existing governing option, is that the discontent to which they give expression, the crystallized form which they impart to the grievance of the people, is then utilized by some other, and typically unsavoury, governing option. They become, in effect, the facilitators for the ascendancy of some other governing option, as the anti-corruption movement undoubtedly became for the National Democratic Alliance.

In contrast to ‘civil society’ organizations, the Left, at least in parts of the country, has succeeded in making a transition from a movement to a governing option. But it faces a problem of a different kind (quite apart from the immediate problem of terror which it faces in West Bengal): if the transition from a movement to a governing option is accompanied by an abandonment of the movement, by an exclusive pre-occupation with the governing option role, which is what happens in all established bourgeois parties, even those whose origins lie in movements, then the Left too would become indistinguishable from these established bourgeois parties. It must, in short, combine both the roles, that of being a movement and that of being a governing option, without compromising either. This requires great theoretical depth which again is not easy to acquire but which must be acquired.

Many of the well-wishers of the Left, concerned about its weakened state after the election, and worried about the adverse consequences of such weakening for the struggle for democracy, secularism and social and economic equality, want the Left to ‘reinvent’ itself by getting back to the path of socio-cultural activism. This is certainly necessary, but in the process it must never lose sight of the need perennially to remain a governing option, for otherwise there will be an ‘NGO-ization’ of the Left, the beneficiaries of which will be established bourgeois political formations, especially the unsavoury ones among them that are currently in ascendancy.

The author is Professor Emeritus, Centre for Economic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

## ENTERPRISES

TELEGRAPH, AUG 20, 2014

### **Bengal to set up trade office in Singapore**

Singapore, Aug 20 (PTI): West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday announced setting up of a nodal office here to promote global investments into West Bengal.

”To facilitate your investment, we will open a nodal office of our Industrial Development Corporation in Singapore,” Banerjee told about 500 businessmen at the West Bengal Business Forum held here.

It would operate round the clock and seven days a week, said the Chief Minister, adding “you can reach us on a telephone call, within a short time”.

Mamata said a Business Focus Centre in Calcutta would also become operational in 18 months to promote investment, trade and cooperation between Singapore and West Bengal.

She said it would be named Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Business and Commerce and that it would work closely with Indian mission in Singapore and business chambers from both countries.

The centre’s mission would be to speed up proposals, opportunities and joint ventures, said Mamata adding entrepreneurs would be able to use facilities at the centre that would represent the chambers.

She also said Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has agreed to consider positively inaugurating the centre.

The Chief Minister described Lee Kuan Yew as “a man as tall as the Himalayas when it comes to progress, development and nation building”.

She also proposed setting up a mentor group and a steering committee on infrastructure development in

She also proposed setting up a mentor group and a steering committee on infrastructure development in West Bengal.

”The mentor group would consist of few visionaries acclaimed globally from cities like Singapore and meet two times in a year, their busy schedule permitting, to guide the steering committee on planning and future mapping,” Mamata said in her keynote address at the forum.

## ENVIRONMENT

STATESMAN, AUG 22, 2014

### **Environmental studies**

Environmental education begins in the classroom but is sustained, fine-tuned and perfected outside its walls. The earlier we adopt this precept in terms of strategy, the better it will be for the quality of our existence and the onus lies on all stakeholders to move collectively towards this objective ~ RUDRASHIS DATTA

Our tryst with environmental education is as old as our scriptures. The first major step to weave such a system of learning into the fabric of our educational curriculum was undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi through his seminal scheme of *nai talim* or 'new education' in 1937. Though his radical approach lost steam in independent India largely due to the demand for a more westernized curricula, his emphasis on the role of environmental awareness in basic education is relevant to this day. India was the first country to formally integrate the concept of education with the environment of the learner. The Education Commission recommended as early as 1966 that 'the aim of teaching science in the primary school should be to develop proper understanding of the main facts, concepts, principles and processes in the physical and biological environment.' However, when it comes to maintaining the initiative, we lack the wherewithal to convert pioneering vision into reality. The fact that the realization of the Education Commission achieved little on the ground can be attested by the fact that two decades later, the National Policy on Education, 1986, stated that "there is a paramount need to create a consciousness of the environment. It must permeate all ages and all sections of society, beginning with the child. Environmental consciousness should inform teaching in schools and colleges. This aspect will be integrated in the entire educational process".

However, the observation remained largely confined to the backyard of our education curriculum until the Supreme Court directed on 22 November 1991 that "through the medium of education, awareness of the environment and its problem related to pollution should be taught as a compulsory subject". On 18 December 2003, the court further directed that NCERT prepare "a module syllabus to be taught at different grades". The National Focus Group on Habitat and Learning (2004) set up by NCERT further fine-tuned the theoretical and practical elements of the curriculum related to environmental education. All national and state-level examination boards have adopted environmental studies as a compulsory course in school and first-degree level education. In contrast, most countries had a viable environment education policy in place in the 1990s. The United States, for example, passed the National Environmental Education Act in 1990, which stated that "threats to human health and environmental quality are increasingly complex, involving a wide range of conventional and toxic contaminants in the air and water and on the land" and that "there is growing evidence of international

environmental problems, such as global warming, ocean pollution, and decline in species diversity, and that these problems pose serious threats to human health and the environment on a global scale". The Act paved the way for the setting up of Green Ribbon schools under the Department of Education which focuses on reducing carbon footprint in learning environments while encouraging and financing alternate energy initiatives in schools. In the United Kingdom, the National Association for Environmental Education, an organization of teachers and lecturers, has been working for the last 50 years to provide academic and material support to learning initiatives in schools in an environment-friendly manner. Even in Bangladesh, environment education has been linked to community development through the Comprehensive Village Development Programme, thereby diversifying the scope of environment education from the curriculum to real-life conditions.

Interestingly enough, the Seventh World Environment Education Congress held in Morocco in 2013, which had the theme 'Environment Education in Cities and Rural Areas: Seeking Greater Harmony', has called for the diversification of conventional environment education initiatives into sustainability issues such as "relationships among diverse cultures, ways of knowing and being in the world, literacy and oral tradition, education, storytelling and learning that is informed and linked to cultural heritage." In other words, the conventional approach to environment education, which has involved mindless formulation of theories, is beginning to experience a transition to the practical aspect ~ a transition that is meant to touch and transform more lives on a universal scale. In contrast, the National Curriculum Framework, devised in 2005 by NCERT as an attempt to give a general national direction to school education in India and followed by most state boards of education is still stuck in the environment education scenario where theorizing about the environmental precepts and rote learning of phenomena defines a child's awareness. A cursory glance at the syllabi and evaluation questions of environmental education across the nation will underscore the fact that students memorize selected theories and re-produce them in the answer papers. Clearly, this defeats the very spirit of the introduction of the subject in school. In contrast, almost a decade back, United Nations Environmental Programme's "Strategy for Environmental Education and Training" warned against such environmental pedagogy by asserting that "environmental awareness raising initiatives are often unstructured and do not follow the basic principles of environmental education. Often such initiatives target people with specific messages aimed at changing their attitudes and behaviours without an understanding of the context of their daily lives. Such approaches to environmental awareness-raising fail to achieve their goals and often hinder other environmental education processes."

Equally disconcerting is our general neglect of training teachers of environmental education. Apart from a few discussion papers, dense with vague generalizations and abstract theorizing, there is little at the policy level to devise appropriate training mechanism for teachers in environmental education. This, despite the fact that UNESCO

had published an exhaustive teacher-training manual titled “Strategies for the Training of Teachers in Environmental Education” way back in 1987. In contrast, the general practice, regrettably, in our educational institutions is to depute a teacher with a background in biological science to ‘manage’ environmental education classes in most schools across the country. These teachers lack specialized training to handle environmental education holistically.

The United Nations had declared 2005-2014 as the decade of sustainable development. The decade witnessed landmark progress in the areas of environment and sustainability across the world. Theorizing had given way to concrete environmental initiatives in the classroom. Environmental education is an area that has evolved continuously over the past decade. However, our environmental education classrooms have lagged behind both in theory and in its practical aspects. Theoretically, the syllabi is outdated and has failed to keep pace with the times. On the practical front, our students have hardly any operative knowhow of the mechanisms of environment and sustainability. Framing an effective environmental education curriculum in an era of rapid evolution of the discipline requires agility, vision and the will to transcend red tape. Abstract theorizing and devising of instructional strategies without considering local sustainability factors can undo the efforts towards universalization of environmental awareness. Environmental education begins in the classroom but is sustained, fine-tuned and perfected outside its walls. The earlier we adopt this precept in terms of strategy, the better it will be for the quality of our existence and the onus lies on all stakeholders to move collectively towards this objective.

The writer is Assistant Professor of English, Raiganj B. Ed. College, Uttar Dinajpur in West Bengal

## HEALTH SERVICES

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 21, 2014

### **Health Ministry justifies merging Aids control body with NRHM**

Amid public concern that winding up the National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) would compromise on controlling the spread of HIV, Health Ministry officials have given their assurance that the programme will not be curtailed and will continue with the same efficacy.

“There will be no change in the programme and its budget. The Aids control programme will run under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) like the tuberculosis or malaria control programme. It is only an administrative step,” Union Health Secretary Lov Verma told Deccan Herald. The department's budget has been increased to Rs 1,785 crore from last fiscal's revised estimate of Rs 1,500 crore.

In the first step towards the merger with the NRHM, department of Aids control secretary V K Subburaj was shifted to the National Commission on Schedule Caste a week ago. Subsequently, an additional secretary was given charge of the department.

“It used to be like that traditionally,” Verma said. Activists, however, are crying foul apprehending the merger, saying it would mean a shift in focus from the HIV/Aids programme. At present, the country has an estimated 21-lakh HIV-infected patients.

“India has been able to make progress on HIV because of this exclusive programme. If the department of Aids control is dismantled at this juncture, the decision will boomerang and HIV can come back severely,” said Manoj Pardeshi from the National Coalition of People Living with HIV.

Since the national Aids control programme began in the 1992, it was managed by NACO, which got a separate department a decade ago and remained an autonomous body under the Health Ministry.

In 2012, however, the Planning Commission, in a steering committee report for the 12th plan, proposed NACO's integration with the NRHM.

The move to merge the NACO with the NRHM is considered to be in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's agenda of “minimum government and maximum governance”.

“It gels with the Narendra Modi government's idea of convergence in the government, just like the department of overseas affairs was brought under the Ministry of External Affairs,” an official said.

## HOUSING

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 22, 2014

### **DDA scraps plan to reserve 80% flats for Delhi residents**

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Thursday scrapped its plan to reserve 80% flats in its new housing scheme for Delhiites.

The authority got an in-principle approval for its 2014 housing scheme that offers 25,600 flats across the city. The proposal with many new clauses such as a five-year cap on the sale of flats was tabled at the authority's meeting chaired by Lt Governor Najeeb Jung, who is also DDA chairman.

The proposal was earlier sent to the L-G for his approval, who asked the DDA to table it in the authority meeting.

The meeting, attended by officials of the union urban development ministry and political representatives apart from DDA officials, went on for nearly two hours. Many of the clauses introduced by DDA for the first time were discussed threadbare.

The plan to reserve 80% flats for Delhi residents didn't find favour with many members and it was eventually scrapped.

"Delhi is a mini-India and you cannot reserve flats on 80-20 ratio here. Many members asked how DDA was going to decide whom to term a Delhi resident" said Jitender Kumar Kochar, a non-official member of the authority.

**25,600**

**FLATS ON  
OFFER**

**₹14-15 lakh**

price range for one  
bedroom flats

**₹1.2 crore**

expected price for higher  
income group flats.

**10-15 lakh**

brochures to be published.

**28 sq/m**

area of one bedroom flats

**₹300cr**

corpus to be created for  
maintenance of flats

## FINAL COUNTDOWN



■ **DDA is expected to announce the date of the schemes soon.**

SONU MEHTA/ HT

■ Flats that are part of the scheme are spread across Delhi in areas such as Rohini, Dwarka, Narela, Libaspur, Vasant Kunj etc.

■ Scheme likely to be launched by the end of this month. Draw of lots likely to be held in October 2014.

### OTHER DECISIONS

■ Land measuring 17 acres for expansion of AllMS Trauma Centre was approved.

■ Expansion will help the hospital add more beds.

■ Media and news agencies and training centres in public and semi-public uses was approved.

■ Modification of Master Plan-2021 for amalgamation of plots up to 200 sq metres approved

Kochar said there could be Delhiites who have migrated to the city recently and don't have a voter identification card and that was no a reason to bar them from applying for a flat.

There were debates on another new clause — a lock-in period of five years before an allottee can sell a flat. The clause was introduced as a measure to ensure only those who genuinely want to live in a DDA flat are allotted one. Many members, however, raised objections.

“Many members said in case someone faces a crisis and would like to sell their property to get some money, this clause would prove a hindrance.

What if someone falls sick and needs money for treatment or if someone's child needs money for higher education and the only asset they have is their flat?” Kochar said.

Members also felt that since an allottee was making full and final payment while buying a DDA flat, they had a right to sell it when they want to.

While the scheme has now been approved in principle, some changes may be brought in the present proposal in the next few days. The DDA is expected to announce the date of the scheme's launch soon and brochures should be available for sale by the end of this month.

## INTERNET

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 21, 2014

### **Cabinet okays Rs 1 lakh crore Digital India programme**

Aiming to provide all government services on internet, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the ambitious Digital India project with an estimated cost of Rs 1 lakh crore.

As per the project, the government plans to put healthcare, property and other records like birth and death certificates online. The project will be implemented in phases from current year to till 2018.

The programme which was envisaged by Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), aims to transform the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy, said Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad after the cabinet meeting.

The programme includes projects that aim to ensure that government services are available to citizens electronically and people get the benefits of the latest information and communication technology.

The programme aims to bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of the government's services electronically, a Unique ID and e-Pramaan based on authentic and standard based interoperable and integrated government applications and data basis.

Various programmes of the different ministries will be brought under the Digital India programme to bring synergy among them including broadband highways, mobile connectivity, public internet access programme, e-governance: reforming government through technology, electronic delivery of services, electronics manufacturing, creating IT sector and early harvest programmes.

High speed internet facility to all gram panchayats, wi-fi facilities to schools, bank account would enable participation in digital and financial space at individual level, easy access to a Common Service Centre within their locality, securing the cyber-space in the country.

## JUDICIARY

TIMES OF INDIA, AUG 22, 2014

### **Judiciary at a crossroads: There are misgivings about judges' appointment Bills even among opponents of collegium system**

The movement to bring about a change in the way judges are appointed started energetically in 2009, when Veerappa Moily took over as law minister and I became the Attorney General. There was agreement all around that the system had to change. A lot of time and effort went into formulating the constitutional amendments in the resultant Bill to replace the collegium system. I personally discussed these issues with several eminent, retired chief justices. We tried to address as many concerns as possible. However, now the battle lines are drawn and positions have hardened.

On the one hand there are obviously the concerns of the judiciary – there is a strong feeling that the collegium system did not require wholesale displacement. Some tweaking and correction was necessary but the system could have been retained.

Nobody can deny the problems that exist. Some outstanding judges were left out of promotions for reasons which may not have been explained and were, in some cases, highly doubtful. Equally, some undeserving candidates sneaked in. There is also general acknowledgment of the lack of transparency.

The problem with the collegium system did not lie in mere exclusion of good people or inclusion of people for the wrong reasons. Talented people were delayed from coming into the Supreme Court, in several cases for reasons which appeared to be based on personal prejudices and predilections.

So several good judges made it to the Supreme Court much later than they deserved, as a result of which they did not even get a chance to preside over benches or effectively contribute to the court. Not only were their careers affected, in some cases they were even deprived of holding the post of Chief Justice of India. There are several sitting judges even today who have been victims of this shortcoming of the collegium system.

On the question of transparency, several chief justices have explained how the system worked and how much time and effort was invested by the collegium in going through the records of prospective candidates and analysing their work. However, these aspects cannot be expressed in public. After all, judges do not give media releases or hold press

conferences. At the highest level, one has heard expressions of res-trained anguish and concern by the Chief Justice of India. Judges could not and cannot say more.

The situation has changed in the last couple of months. There have been dramatic disclosures and blog posts. The timing of such disclosures has been criticised in various quarters. Motives have been ascribed. However, what has been said has not been seriously controverted.

These disclosures have focussed sharply on the underlying problems, and were one of the factors which galvanised the government into action. More so when highly respected former judges have confirmed the correctness of what was stated in these dramatic disclosures. In such circumstances, the seriousness of the issues just could not be brushed aside.

Nevertheless, strong words were uttered the moment the constitutional amendments to set up a national judicial appointments commission were approved by Parliament, even by those who had earlier come out against the collegium system. Fali Nariman was first off the block. He expressed his point of view immediately after the Rajya Sabha approved the amendments. Kapil Sibal entered the fray shortly thereafter. Legal challenges have been threatened and are probably inevitable.

Through all this the government seems to have decided, perhaps wisely, not to enlarge the public debate. The challenge would be met as and when it presented itself in court.

Undoubtedly, that challenge is going to come. Battle lines will be sharpened. Issues will become more focussed. However, my concern is about what is going to emerge in the near future. There are so many alternatives before the court. One is, of course, to affirm the amendment Bill. The other would be to strike it down completely, on the ground that it violates the Constitution's basic structure. I have serious doubts about the latter approach.

The 'basic structure' which would be spoken of in the second approach would simply refer to the independence of the judiciary. But mounting a challenge on this ground is not going to be easy. It is all very well to call the independence of the judiciary a part of the Constitution's basic structure. But this basic structure cannot be determined with respect to concepts. Instead it involves the words and provisions of the Constitution as originally enacted.

Another approach could be to resort to some sort of mechanical surgery such as striking down some portions of the Bill. I am not very convinced such an approach will be practical or fully satisfactory.

So what lies ahead? Are we on a collision course? Is there a possibility of consensus? Can consensus be resorted to in constitutional challenges? Can one approach issues only in black and white?

This is my primary concern: I anticipate that positions on either side may harden. If so, concern for the system and judicial independence becomes greater.

I started by asking, is there a way forward? It is for all of us to decide whether we want a solution or whether we want a perpetuation of the problem. The future of the judiciary rests on whether there will be emancipated statesmanship on all sides.

The writer is a former Attorney General of India.

## LIBRARIES

TIMES OF INDIA, AUG 22, 2014

**Allahabad University Central Library to get a facelift**

[Rajeev Mani](#)

ALLAHABAD: The Allahabad University authorities have decided to revamp the Central Library. Varsity authorities have asked CPWD to prepare a blue print and the estimate of the proposed project.

As per the plan, the library will get centralized air-conditioning and another floor. The structure too would be refurbished. The decision was taken at the meeting of the building and work's committee (B&WC). Committee cleared renovation and beautification of library premises, including the entrance, tile flooring, false ceiling etc.

The committee also decided to construct an additional floor at the top with pre-fabricated materials to ensure more space to library authorities and protect the building.

The committee also recommended provision for ACs in different sections of the building. Along with this, ramp facility for disabled users would also be constructed apart from the facility of lift in the stack area. There would be aluminum and glass partition or open cubicles for staff members and existing windows, barring that of the stack area, would be replaced by aluminum windows. The hall, located on the second floor, would be renovated for user awareness programmes.

The committee also approved installation of low voltage works, fire detection and alarm system, fire extinguishing system, CCTV etc. Apart from these, white washing and painting of the entire building will also be taken up.

"The recommendations of the committee would go a long way in improving things at the library which needs immediate attention of the authorities as it is also reeling under acute shortage of staff," said deputy librarian, BK Singh.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BUSINESS LINE, AUG 20, 2014

### **Venkaiah Naidu asks Delhi municipal officials**

**Seeks action plan for regularisation of unauthorised colonies**

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and all the municipal bodies of Delhi have been instructed by Urban Development Minister M Venkaiah Naidu to get their respective land mapped using latest GIS and information technology, a statement from the Ministry said.

Naidu on Tuesday reviewed issues relating to urbanisation and development of the National Capital Region with Members of Parliament from Delhi, Mayors and Chief Executives of municipal bodies.

The Minister said details of land should be made available in the public domain and all MPs, MLAs and Corporators and the general public should provide necessary information in this regard to respective agencies to address encroachment.

He also suggested that DDA submit details of various pending court cases in respect of land encroachment and launch a campaign for eviction.

An institutional framework will also be put in place for creation of a separate agency for maintenance of public toilets in Delhi on public-private partnership basis, which would be examined by the Urban Development Ministry in consultation with the Delhi Government, the statement added.

Naidu said a concept paper should be prepared within 15 days for a fresh look at regularisation of all unauthorised colonies in Delhi, after which the State Government will prepare an action plan.

Elections are due in Delhi, which has been under President's rule since February.

He also suggested that DDA submit details of various pending court cases in respect of land encroachment and launch a campaign for eviction.

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 21, 2014

### **Politics of Kashmir**

Kuldip Nayar

BETWEEN THE LINES

**Article 370 is not meant to reflect the liberal tilt in the Indian Constitution. It is specific.**

It gives a special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir—a status which the people of Jammu and Kashmir won after waging a long, tough fight for freedom both from the British and the Maharaja ruling the state. Sheikh Abdullah was in the lead and achieved what looked impossible at one time, an autonomous status within the sovereign, secular Republic of India.

Except three subjects—defence, foreign affairs and communications—the Indian parliament had no power to legislate without the consent of the state legislature. The state could have merged with Pakistan, but preferred to integrate with secular India because the entire struggle by the Kashmiris was secular.

The undertakings given at that time are sacred and cannot be written off by the people who are of different thinking. The state had adopted even a separate constitution passed to make it clear the state would not compromise on its autonomy. Watering it down now will amount to betrayal of the confidence which the people of Jammu and Kashmir had reposed in New Delhi. If any change had to be made, it has to be done by them. The Indian Union which the state had joined cannot amend its powers without the consent of the state people.

To give more subjects to Delhi is the prerogative of Srinagar. Sheikh Abdullah joined the Union on that understanding. Some elements trying to undo the understanding accorded to the state's people are neither serving the cause of India, nor that of the state. In fact, most of what is happening in Kashmir is irrelevant and confusing.

Take the meeting of some Hurriyat leaders with the Pakistan high commissioner Abdul Basit in Delhi. Such meetings had taken place in the past too. The Indian government did not raise any objection to them then because they were taken as exercises to exchange views from the sidelines. Shabbir Shah was only following a practice of several other Kashmiri leaders. To be charitable to him, one can say that he met the Pakistan high commissioner as he or some other leaders would have done in the past, without a furore.

The Pakistan high commissioner, however, is to be blamed because he knew that the Narendra Modi government had discontinued such practices. In his case, New Delhi made a request not to meet the Hurriyat leaders.

Despite the majority in India being opposed to the 'cozy relationship,' the Pakistan high

commissioner went ahead with the meeting. He should have anticipated the anger sweeping through India.

Apart from some sort of bravado, there was nothing positive about the meeting. New Delhi's policy on Kashmir is to monopolise power and dilute the special status of Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah had kept the issue alive with some authoritarian thinking. When he challenged New Delhi, he was detained in a special jail at a faraway Tamil Nadu for 12 years. No doubt, Jawaharlal Nehru tried to rub off the stigma of being power crazy and put up the Sheikh at his house after the detention.

But history judged Nehru as a ruthless ruler who did not spare even his intimate friends. The same thinking prevails when those who want independence are called separatists. They are wrong in projecting a demand which has acquired a fundamentalist edge. In the bargain, the secular Sheikh's contribution has been forgotten.

No doubt, the Hurriyat is a divided house. Some, led by Syed Shah Geelani, want the state to 'join' Pakistan. And the others, led by Yasin Malik, demand azaadi. Then there are those who are confused. Not long ago, when most Kashmiris, alienated from India as they are, favoured the integration with Pakistan, the Kashmiris would have voted for Pakistan if there had been a plebiscite. Today, a preponderant majority of Kashmiris, want azaadi. Yasin Malik has been able to veer them round from being pro-Pakistan elements to making them accept the demand for an independent, sovereign state.

Yet what the Hurriyat does not realise is that azaadi is an ideal, not a feasible proposition. When the British left India in August 1947, they gave the princely states an option to stay independently and they did not want to join either India or Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh, the then Jammu and Kashmir ruler, declared that he would stay independent. The land-locked state had to have the support of both India and Pakistan for access to the outside world. He did not want to depend on one.

With the Muslims in a majority in J and K, Pakistan expected its accession. When it did not take place, Pakistan sent its irregulars, backed by the regular troops. The Maharaja sought the help of India which insisted on the accession before sending its troops. He had to sign the Instrument of Accession Act.

When India is in the midst of endeavour for polarization and when a political party is playing a Hindu card, it is difficult to imagine that the Congress or any other political party, including the Communists, would support the Hurriyat. Even otherwise, all political parties are opposed to the demand for independence, although some may go to the farthest in giving powers to the state.

After 67 years of partition, the wounds inflicted because of the division have not healed yet. How does the Hurriyat expect the people in India to reconcile to another partition, however genuine and strong are the sentiments of the Kashmiris?

If partition is again on the basis of religion, the secular state may not survive as it

is. True, the 15 crore Muslims in India are equal citizens and they cannot be treated as hostages. But the valley's secession may have such repercussions which are dreadful to imagine.

The Hurriyat has to introspect and change its tactics. It has to prove that it counts.

## PRIME MINISTERS

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 21, 2014

### **'Mini PMO' in Varanasi, courtesy Amit Shah**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday moved closer towards fulfilling the promises he had made to the people of Varanasi, when his close aide and BJP national president Amit Shah inaugurated what was touted as a “mini PMO”.

Shah said that Varanasi will be made an “ideal city”. “In the next five years, Varanasi will undergo a complete change,” he said.

Situated in Ravindrapuri locality in Varanasi, the office would be equipped with all modern facilities. “The centre will act as a bridge between the people of Kashi (old name of Varanasi) and the prime minister,” he said. “People of the constituency can approach the centre with their problems and they would be attended to by officials without any delay,” Shah added.

## RAILWAYS

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 21, 2014

### **160 kmph train between Delhi-Agra from November**

A decision to run the 160-kmph semi high-speed train between New Delhi and Agra from November this year was taken at a high-level meeting of the Railway Ministry on Wednesday.

In the meeting, it was decided to conduct one more trial run within a week before the launch of regular services.

Fast-tracking the semi-high speed trains project, the Railway Board sat down with 19 Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs) and other high ranking officials to thrash out the details. It asked DRMs of remaining eight sections where high speed trains are being introduced to submit their feasibility reports within two weeks.

The sections include Mysore-Bangalore-Chennai, Delhi-Chandigarh, Delhi-Kanpur, Nagpur-Bilaspur, Mumbai-Goa, Mumbai-Ahmedabad, Chennai-Hyderabad and Nagpur-Secunderabad.

“Only after receiving the feasibility reports, the commencement dates of speed trains on these sections will be decided,” Board Chairman Arunendra Kumar told Deccan Herald.

The nine corridors in all were announced by Railway Minister Sadananda Gowda in his budget speech in accordance with the Modi government’s high priority to increasing the speed of trains.

The chairman indicated that the fare on these trains will be on a par with other passenger trains. “Revenue earning is not the criterion for these trains,” Kumar added.

Regarding Delhi-Agra train, Kumar said a trial of the single locomotive, 10-car train was conducted on July 3 to test fitness of track at a speed of 160 kmph. Experts approved the trial as successful.

The trial run took 102 minutes and 105 minutes from New Delhi-Agra Cantonment and Agra Cantonment- New Delhi respectively. He said the New Delhi-Agra route has manned level crossing and all other safety aspects have been taken into consideration.

The semi-high speed train on Delhi-Agra route will have the highest speed compared to the other corridors proposed. Delhi-Chandigarh semi-high speed train may have a speed of 130 kmph.

“We have to reduce the duration of travel. The speed may vary according to that. If we reduce travel time by speeding up, people will be happy,” said Kumar.

## RELIGION AND STATE

TRIBUNE, AUG 18, 2014

### **Haryana clears policy for giving govt land to religious institutions**

The Haryana Cabinet on Sunday approved the policy for allotment of government land to various trusts for construction of places of worship or community centres. The Cabinet, which met under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, also okayed an amendment for granting licences to set up low-density eco-friendly colonies and authorised the Chief Minister to provide tax relief under the Haryana Value Added Tax Act-2003 to the textile industry.

The Cabinet put its stamp on the government's decision to give an option of extension of service to the employees till the age of 60 depending on their fitness while the Class-IV employees will serve till the age of 62 years. The date of superannuation will remain unchanged.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Hooda said the VAT relief would be applicable to sarees, shawls, unstitched ladies suits, bed sheets with pillow covers of the value not exceeding Rs 500 and textile mats of value not exceeding Rs 50 per piece.

As per the policy for allotment of government land to religious institutions, the Chief Minister said: "The government would consider allotment of land only at places where the government land is available and can be spared for the purpose. This policy does not in any manner create a right for anyone to demand allotment of land for the said purposes," he said.

On low-density, eco-friendly colonies, he said: "Currently, the minimum area requirement for establishment of such a colony is 100 acres. No additional licences in continuation of a license already granted for such colonies would be allowed unless the applicant has chunk of at least 25 acres for which additional license application can be submitted."

The Cabinet approved a proposal to bring an ordinance for inserting "Amnesty Scheme" in the Haryana Value Added Tax Act to facilitate recovery of old arrears of taxes and to provide relief to all types of dealers from payment of penalties and interest. Tax arrears including interest and penalty amounting to Rs 5,560.43 crore are outstanding in the state as on June 30, 2014. Amending its existing policy for providing compassionate appointment in feeder cadre in Class-III and IV posts to a dependent of martyr of armed forces personnel or paramilitary forces personnel, the Cabinet said the dependent of martyrs who lost their life prior to January 1, 2014 would be covered under the policy.

It was decided to provide government job in group C and D posts in the police department to 17 dependents of martyrs who were killed in action.

The Cabinet also approved that the computer faculty engaged through service providers would continue to be paid directly by the Department of School Education. The Cabinet extended the last date for qualifying the HTET and BEd exams (in respect of PGTs) from April 1, 2015 to January 1, 2018.

In another decision, the Cabinet decided that the Commonwealth Games medal winners who have not applied for jobs, will be given a job.

### **Cabinet decisions**

- The Chief Minister gets authority to give tax relief under the Haryana VAT Act-2003 to textile products. VAT relief to be applicable to sarees, shawls, unstitched women's suits, bed sheets with pillow covers
- To recover old arrears of taxes, a proposal to bring an ordinance for inserting "Amnesty Scheme" in the Haryana Value Added Tax Act okayed
- State government employees will get an option to serve till the age of 60 years "provided they are fit to continue in service". Similarly, the Class-IV employees will serve till the age of 62 years

## WAR MEMORIALS

TIMES OF INDIA, AUG 22, 2014

### **National War Memorial finalized at India Gate complex**

[Rajat Pandit](#)



NEW DELHI: The long-pending National War Memorial (NWM) will come up at the India Gate complex on the Central Vista, with its museum located in the adjoining Princess Park, to honour the soldiers who laid down their lives guarding an independent India.

This was finalized at a meeting held by finance and defence minister Arun Jaitley with the three Service chiefs, Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha, Admiral Robin Dhowan and General Dalbir Singh Suhag, and defence secretary R K Mathur on Thursday.

"The Cabinet will, of course, have to give the final nod for the NWM project which will cost Rs 400 crore," said a source. The defence ministry will issue a global tender for the construction of the NWM, which involves a landscape-type memorial around the 'chhatri' (canopy) near India Gate and "retaining walls" with the names of martyrs inscribed on them. As was first reported by TOI, the NWM will be largely underground, with a subway connecting the chhatri area with the museum at the nearby Princess Park, in order to not disrupt the layout and spoil the aesthetics of the Central Vista.

This was the ground on which the Union urban development ministry and the Delhi Urban Art Commission had for long opposed the NWM project. The majestic India Gate, incidentally, was built by the British to honour the 84,000 Indian soldiers killed fighting for the imperialistic power in World War-I and the Afghan campaign.

The Amar Jawan Jyoti was later built under the arch of India Gate in 1972 as a tribute to the almost 4,000 soldiers killed in the 1971 war. But there is still no NWM with the names of all those soldiers who fell in the 1947-48 J&K operation, the 1962, 1965 and 1971 wars, Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka in the late-1980s and the 1999 Kargil conflict as well as insurgency and terrorism. The NWM, once it comes up, will fulfil one of the longest-standing demands of the armed forces, who often feel slighted by the politico-bureaucratic combine.

Incidentally, the three Service chiefs on Thursday also briefed the 7th Central Pay Commission (CPC) chairman Justice (retd) A K Mathur on the long-pending pay and pension "anomalies" of the armed forces. Much like the NWM, which is yet to become a reality despite being first mooted in the 1960s, the armed forces have remained angry with successive pay commissions for ignoring what they call their legitimate demands. The armed forces had even demanded "full representation" on the 7th CPC since they said its members may not be able to "fully grasp" the "unique challenges" of military

service. Though they did not get representation, they want the 7th CPC to address their concerns over "status, parity and equivalence" now.

## WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 21, 2014

### **Dying wildlife**

While Karnataka can take pride in the fact that it is home to the largest number of tigers in the country – the recent National Tiger Census revealed that the state has 350 tigers – it doesn't seem to be doing a good job in protecting its wild cats.

Around 35 tigers are said to have died over the past three years due to natural and unnatural causes. Forest officials are yet to establish the reasons behind several of these deaths. Understanding the cause of the death of tigers is important, as any strategy to protect them will be based on the nature of threats they face. Many of the tiger deaths occurred outside forest areas. It is likely that when tigers stray out of the forests into surrounding fields and villages, they are being killed by frightened villagers. There is the problem too of poaching that continues unabated across the country despite a slew of measures taken to halt this abhorrent practice. Such poaching often takes place with the help of forest officials and politicians.

Officials focus on forest areas but it is in the surrounding areas that the fate of the tiger has become precarious. Improved staffing and equipping of the forest department and better co-ordination between various departments is needed. Punishment of poachers is imperative but this isn't happening; just one person was convicted for tiger poaching in Karnataka over the past three years. Besides tigers, elephants too are getting killed in large numbers. Elephants often go on a rampage and destroy crops. To prevent this, farmers electrify fences. These are electrocuting elephants and killing them. The problem of elephant poaching too is said to be on the rise in forests along the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border. Officials are said to have recovered several tusks from poachers recently.

In contrast to the forests where they are hunted and killed, tigers and leopards in the Bannerghatta Biological Park and Rescue Centre seem to be doing well of late. In fact, their rising numbers has forced the Central Zoo Authority of India to order zoos across the country to stop breeding leopards, hybrid lions and tigers. While the rise in numbers of zoo tigers and leopards is heartening, it is the tiger in the wild that needs our attention. The government must halt mining activity and preserve green cover if it is serious about protecting the tiger.