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AGRICULTURE

TRIBUNE, DEC 19, 2014

CM sets up group of ministers for promoting agriculture

Chief Minister Harish Rawat and Horticulture Minister Harak Singh Rawat release a book at Kisan Bhavan in Dehradun on Thursday. Tribune photo: Abhyudaya Kotnala

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Harish Rawat today announced setting up of a group of ministers for ensuring better coordination between agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, sericulture and tea production departments. Addressing the inaugural session of a two-day state-level workshop on horticulture being held at Madho Singh Bhandari Kisan Bhavan, Dehradun, today, Chief Minister Harish Rawat apart from setting up a group of ministers also directed for coming up with a workplan for ensuring better workings of these departments. He emphasised on the need of agriculture equipments that are hill agriculture friendly. He said efforts were also on to bring agriculture and horticulture in one single platform. Referring to land consolidation (chakbandi), Chief Minister Harish Rawat said land consolidation was important to strengthen agriculture in hills. He said states like Himachal Pradesh have progressed in agriculture and horticulture sectors mainly because of introduction of land consolidation. He also stressed on identifying new areas of production of apples and called for preparation of a master plan in this regard. He also informed that farmers above the age of 60 years will be provided with pensions. The Chief Minister on the occasion also visited an exhibition of agriculture equipments put up on the occasion. He released state horticulture department's souvenir. Uttarakhand Agriculture Minister Harak Singh Rawat said Uttarakhand was fast getting an identity of a horticulture state. He said horticulture is proving to be a big source of livelihood opportunities for the people of the state. He also underlined the need of undertaking cluster based agriculture. Additional Chief Secretary S Raju, Secretary Horticulture and Secretary Horticulture Dr Nidhi Pandey also spoke on the occasion.

CIVIL SERVICE

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 23, 2014

PM Narendra Modi to meet secretaries for inputs on 'Make in India'

Sources said the action plan is expected to include suggestions for the Budget, where the manufacturing sector is set to be given top billing.

NEW DELHI: At a time when the ambitious 'Make in India' strategy is under attack, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet secretaries dealing with the 25 focus sectors and seek their inputs for the action plan for the next two to three years.

Sources said the action plan is expected to include suggestions for the Budget, where the [manufacturing sector](#) is set to be given top billing as the Modi government remains firm in its desire to push local activity to create jobs and boost investment. A session with finance minister Arun Jaitley ahead of the [Budget](#) was also being contemplated.

Sources said the department of industrial policy and promotion has lined up a day-long workshop between the secretaries and CEOs, who will be divided into 15 groups. In the evening, the secretaries will submit their reports to the PM in a three-slide presentation spelling what has been done, the strategy for the next 24-36 months and the issues involved.

As reported first by TOI on December 9, Nripendra Misra, principal secretary to the PM, has already listed 36 tasks to work on for various ministries - including finance, corporate affairs, commerce, power and environment - by January-end to help improve India's position in the 'Ease of Doing Business' rankings.

The meeting scheduled for December 29 comes at a time when industry has started complaining of inaction by the government in major areas - from easier green clearances to failure of the PPP model and a land acquisition law that is holding up projects. The 'Make in India' strategy launched by Modi amid much fanfare has also been questioned by RBI governor Raghuram Rajan who said China's export-led model should not be used.

On Friday, when asked about a China-like strategy for manufacturing, chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian had said that India will have to find its own model.

Government officials have, however, defended the 'Make in India' strategy. "You never make goods only for domestic market.

No manufacturer across the world does only for the domestic market. You do it initially but then you expand, you grow and penetrate global markets," industrial policy and promotion secretary Amitabh Kant said last week.

Kant, who is pushing the strategy, attacked the governor's remarks on an export-led strategy. "...your share (of global trade) is so low, what we are talking about is 1.7% and we are

saying do not export. This is the time you must penetrate global markets with much greater vigour and energy," he said at an event.

HINDU, DEC 22, 2014

State officials to be sent to Singapore for training

APPAJI REDDEM

The exercise of the Andhra Pradesh government in developing a world class capital is picking up pace with the government all set to send a team of officials to Singapore for training shortly.

Simultaneously, another team of officials from Singapore will be landing in Vijayawada for study, according to sources in the State government and Singapore.

“Officials from different departments will be sent to Singapore for training in several aspects related to the formation of capital city,” said a source in the government. The training is scheduled to begin from January 19, 2015 according to an official associated with an industrial outfit in Singapore.

“The accommodation has already been booked and the training is expected to last for a fortnight,” he said.

Meanwhile, a team of six officials from Singapore is expected to camp in Vijayawada from January to June to prepare the master plan for the proposed capital city in the 7,000 and odd sq km in the Vijayawada, Guntur, Tenali and Mangalagiri (VGTM) region.

The fortnight-long training is scheduled to begin from January 19, 2015

TELEGRAPH, DEC 19, 2014

IAS officers stand up for 'honest' peer

Piyush Kumar Tripathi

The IAS Officers' Association of Bihar is in no mood to relent meekly over the suspension of Patna Municipal Corporation commissioner Kuldip Narayan.

The Bihar branch of IAS Officers' Association has communicated the matter to the Centre almost a week after chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi and chief secretary Anjani Kumar Singh assured its representatives of reconsidering the suspension of Narayan. Its treasurer and water resources secretary Dipak Kumar Singh told **The Telegraph** on Thursday that a resolution adopted by the body in its meeting on Monday had been sent to the cabinet secretary of Government of India, secretary of department of personnel and training, and Central IAS Association.

The association members had met Manjhi on Friday evening after the state government suspended Narayan. The next day, its representatives had met chief secretary Anjani Kumar Singh.

The resolution of the association on Monday stated that the action against Narayan was initiated at the behest of vested interests. Its members also resolved to file an RTI petition to get documents on the suspension of Narayan from the general administration and the urban development and housing departments.

The representatives of the association were slated to meet Manjhi again late on Thursday evening. "The chief minister was at Jehanabad on Thursday, and we were given an assurance of a meeting with him soon after he returns to Patna," said Vivek Kumar Singh, the secretary at the association and principal environment and forests secretary.

Association president Alok Kumar Sinha said: "We shall meet the chief minister again and request him to look into the matter."

Most of the bureaucrats seem agitated over Narayan's suspension. "He is being victimised for taking on the building mafia according to the directive of the high court. Now, some sections of the government has compromised with the mafia and trying to remove him from the corporation," said a senior IAS officer.

Mass support

Narayan is getting enormous support from different sections of the society following his suspension. His supporters have created a group on Facebook titled "We support Kuldip Narayan in his fight against corruption". It had 1,235 members as on Thursday.

A web petition started by IIM-Bangalore Alumni Association titled "PM Narendra Modi: Intervene to protect Kuldip Narayan, an honest IAS officer" has been signed by 1,000 people till date.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 19, 2014

e-SamikSha: A new digital monitor for bureaucracy to rein in slackers

[Vikas Dhoot](#)

It allows a real-time clear view of intra and inter-departmental file movements and gives them the power to intervene when a babu is taking it too easy.

NEW DELHI: Modi Sarkar has launched a frontal attack on Indian bureaucracy's greatest power — the power not to do anything. And it has done this via a brand new digital platform — called [e-SamikSha](#) — that allows sarkar's top bosses a real-time clear view of intra and inter-departmental file movements and gives them the power to intervene when a babu is taking it too easy.

Developed by the cabinet secretariat with technical support from the [National Informatics Centre](#) (NIC), e-SamikSha — the second 'S' in uppercase is how it's officially written — has been operational for just over a month and has changed babus' working style. So, if, say, a joint secretary is sitting on a file on a big infrastructure project that's a PMO

priority, this system will allow the prime minister to intervene digitally and ask the officer concerned to explain the delay or expedite decision-making.

e-SamikSha Explained

ALL HIGH-PRIORITY policy issues, projects and action points to be tracked digitally through a real-time monitoring system

ONCE AN ISSUE or action point is identified, e-mail alerts and text messages sent to concerned officials of relevant departments

PM GETS A DIGITAL dashboard view on status of all major action points

CABINET SECRETARIAT is monitoring 400-odd files based on decisions taken at several meetings of ministries with the PM and his office

INFRASTRUCTURE TARGETS, administrative reforms, pending court cases, Ganga Rejuvenation and Swachh Bharat also being tracked

OTHER MINISTRIES to follow suit, for tracking intra-ministry actions

STATE GOVERNMENT actions also included on portal that also tracks Centre-State co-ordination issues

PM, CABINET SECRETARY can intervene when a file stuck inexplicably. Their remarks appear in 'RED' on officers' PC screens

SYSTEM ALREADY speeding up several outcomes in cabinet secretariat and HRD ministry, officials claim

TRANSPARENCY TO HELP babus act without fear and leave auditable trail of their efficacy

And worse — the PM's interventions appear in bright red on the officer's screen. The cabinet secretary's interventions also appear in red. Warnings from other bosses such as department secretaries or state government chief secretaries appear in other colours.

ETspoke to senior officials in various departments as well as NIC personnel for this story. All of them spoke on the condition they not be identified, saying they were officially unauthorised to speak on the matter.

Before the warnings come the alerts. In e-SamikSha, the moment a job is assigned to a department, text messages and email alerts go to all officers responsible for delivery and their top bosses. A unique identity number is also automatically generated for each task. This number allows easy digital tracking of a project's progress.

From then on, every electronic file movement can be monitored at the click of a mouse by the sarkar's big guns and the system allows a boss to retrieve the file's journey at any point of time. Therefore, e-SamikSha is both a project monitoring system as well as an audit trail of the bureaucracy's efficiency.

Over 400 initiatives, projects and action points are already being digitally monitored through e-SamikSha.

Every task is assigned four status descriptors - Not Started, Under Implementation, Implemented and No Further Action Required.

The PM navigates through e-SamikSha via a digital dashboard that has customised drop-down windows - each allowing him to see progress in different areas such infrastructure, administrative reforms, pending court cases and special campaigns like Swachh Bharat and Ganga Rejuvenation.

"Aasaan hai - Shuru to Karein" (It's easy - let's at least start) and "Monitor, Follow Up, Action" are the taglines assigned by the government to e-SamikSha. The software application that runs the system is hosted at NIC's [National Data Centre in Delhi](#). The cabinet secretariat is gung-ho about this digital class monitor for babus. A senior official in the secretariat said, "We have been able to use e-SamikSha to speed up and improve compliance.

Since most activities are online, we have been able to move to a virtually paperless culture that helps save time, travel costs and physical movement of forms and personnel."

The new system's champions stress that it can facilitate fearless decision-making. "Since e-SamikSha is transparent and interactive, it helps dispel fears about taking decisions...the fear of future investigation is less when all your bosses can see all the time what you are doing," the official said. There's a Centrestate module in e-SamikSha as well to cope with coordination issues.

"Several states have already started updating the status of action points that need to be completed at their level," said another official in the secretariat. The human resources ministry has its own twist to e-SamikSha, calling it HRD-SamikSha. HRD's digital monitoring system has a specific module for tracking VIP requests on school and college admissions, among other things.

Every time an action point is added to this system, it generates a unique identity number for the issue and allocates it automatically to the relevant departments that need to act on it. "Every time a meeting is held by these departments on the issue, the decision is updated on the portal and higherlevel officials can step in at any stage to give directions," the official said. Other ministries are also seeking to create their own versions of e-SamikSha for intra-ministry file movement.

Right now, when babus see red, they know the PM is watching them.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 17, 2014

Use space technology to improve administrative performance, Cabinet secretary Ajit Seth tells babus

[Yogima Sharma](#)

A joint secretary level babu in every ministry will be made the nodal officer in charge of bringing the sarkar into the satellite age.

NEW DELHI: Is the [cabinet secretary](#) asking for the moon or — given the success of Mangalyaan — for Mars? That's what senior babus are wondering after receiving a directive from [Ajit Seth](#), the cabinet secretary, on using space technology to improve administrative and service delivery performance across ministries.

"Honourable [Prime Minister](#) has emphasised the need for gainful application of tools and data products based on space technology," the cabinet secretary had said in a note dated December 9, a copy of which is available with ET.

As if invoking the PM wasn't enough of a hint that bureaucrats need to take this seriously, Seth's directive also asks them to come up with action plans in two weeks — an awfully tight deadline by sarkari standards and especially so for an idea that many babus privately reckon is a bit spaced out. But the cabinet secretary has left no wiggle room, his note having worked out the hierarchy of implementing and monitoring authorities.

A [joint secretary](#) level babu in every ministry will be made the [nodal officer](#) in charge of bringing the sarkar into the [satellite](#) age, and will lead a team of babus dedicated entirely to this project. This JS will report to the [ministry secretary and the secretary](#) in turn will bring the top boss, the cabinet secretary, up to speed, briefing him once every month.

While space technology has widespread commercial, war and national security, meteorological, cartographic, agricultural and disaster management applications — from GPS to satellite photos and maps — bureaucrats ET spoke to were considerably puzzled over using these data and tools for upgrading general ministry performance.

Bureaucrats who spoke on the condition they not be identified were equally concerned about high order of planning asked for by the cabinet secretary. Seth's note said: "I suggest that action plans for use of space technology are firmed up over the next two weeks. It should clearly bring out the institutional mechanism for use of space technology, involvement of state governments/field manpower, key projects envisaged, benefits to public and the timelines and estimates of budget requirement for implementing such projects."

But crucially, say babus, how space technology can be made relevant to individual ministries has been left for ministries to decide. The directive simply requires that space application projects envisaged by ministries must be "novel" and "meaningful" in the current Indian context and lead to substantial improvement in service delivery.

So, the cabinet secretary has told senior bureaucrats that "it is expected that space technology tools would facilitate policy formulation and implementation of schemes as also monitoring of output and outcome."

State governments and local bodies are also to be involved in this exercise, the central bureaucracy has been told. Babus are hoping that a two-day workshop under the auspices of the department of space — the nodal agency for this project — may provide some clarity on how to align file movements with satellite orbits.

But the workshop will mean heavy work for the attendees. As Seth tells his bureaucrats, "at this workshop, user departments would be required to pose their specific requirements and challenges which could be best resolved through application of tools of space technology".

So, how will space technology help, say, the ministry of micro, small and medium enterprises? Babus are hoping they can soon find an answer to this and numerous similar questions.

DECCAN HERALD, DEC 18, 2014

SC asks Centre to take permission before appointment of CVC, VC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre not to appoint Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) and Vigilance Commissioner (VC) without taking its permission. A bench of Chief Justice H L Dattu and Madan B Lokur asked the government to submit the details about the selection process by January 14.

Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the Centre, told the court that he will be filing the relevant records pertaining to the selection process in a sealed cover. The court, taking his submission into account, allowed the government to go ahead with the process but after submitting all materials.

A PIL filed by NGO Centre for Integrity, Governance and Training in Vigilance Administration, contended that the Centre was going ahead with the appointment of CVC and VC without giving wide publicity to the vacancies arising on the completion of tenure of the then CVC Pradip Kumar and the then VC J M Garg. Kumar and Garg completed their tenure on September 28 and September 7, respectively.

Senior advocate Ram Jethmalani and advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioner NGO had earlier referred to the July 21 letter issued by the secretary, department of personnel and training (DoPT), to secretaries in government to suggest names for empanelment for the post of CVC and VC, claiming it aimed at keeping away the common people. The letter was contrary to the direction issued by apex court in the case of Vineet Narayan Vs Union of India, they had contended.

They also claimed that it was not necessary to put a restriction that every person who applied for the post should be a civil servant.

However, the government submitted before the court which raised question over lack of transparency, that the Cabinet Secretary and 36 other secretaries proposed the names of

120 people for the post, out of which 20 names are taken and five people are shortlisted and forwarded to the selection committee.

The court had on August 4 issued notice to the Centre on a PIL filed by the NGO seeking to restrain the government from proceeding ahead with the appointment. The petitioner also sought direction to make the appointment of CVC and VCs more transparent through public advertisement on the lines of Lokpal.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 17, 2014

Retiring babus to have achievements showcased by Department of Personnel and Training

Under the voluntary scheme, employees retiring in the next six months will be provided with an online facility to submit a list of their achievements.

NEW DELHI: The usual garlanding and samosa- chai parties aside, retiring central government [employees](#) can now mark their going out of service with a dossier of their achievements and initiatives which would be showcased [online](#) to inspire their peers.

In a unique initiative, the [Department of Personnel and Training](#) (DoPT) has mooted a proposal for creating a "platform to showcase the significant achievements" of civil servants which they can look back on at the time of retirement with "satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment".

Under the voluntary scheme, employees who are retiring in the next six months will be provided with an online facility to submit a list of their [outstanding achievements](#).

The said employees will be asked to give details as to commendable work done by them, their achievements and new ideas given by them which contributed to the efficiency, economy and effectiveness of government functioning.

The commendable work defined by DoPT includes innovation leading to improved work culture and creation of manuals and publications related to work.

The write-ups thus submitted will be displayed on the DoPT website to serve as a "motivator for serving employees".

The government has, however, clarified that comments which are religious or political in nature or against national interest will not be permitted.

"The exercise would be completed at least one month before retirement and the result uploaded on the departmental website. While an online system will be designed for this purpose, it would be possible for employees to submit hard copies instead of going online," states the circular in this regard.

The retiring employees have also been asked to remember to mention where relevant the contribution of the entire team along with the names of their team members.

HINDU, DEC 16, 2014

Officials fined for not giving information under RTI Act

T.V. SIVANANDAN

State Information Commissioner Shankar R. Patil, who chaired a hearing of pending appeals against denial of information by different government departments and the Gulbarga City Corporation here on Monday, imposed penalties and issued warnings to officials against desisting from delaying information sought for by the general public under the Right to Information Act.

According to a press release, the commission considered 25 cases pending since long and referred two of them back to the chief executive officer of the zilla panchayat with a direction to settle them within a month.

The release said that the State Information Commissioner ordered issue of notice and imposed a fine of Rs. 10,000 on the commissioner of the Gulbarga City Corporation for not providing information sought for by an appellant within the stipulated time. The press release, however, did not contain any more information but mentioned only the fine imposed. Attempts to obtain details were in vain as no official from the commission was available.

Sedam tahsildar

While disposing of four cases pending against the tahsildar of Sedam taluk in the district in connection with denial of information to appellant Mahadevamma, the Information Commissioner imposed a fine of Rs. 2,500 on the tahsildar.

The information sought for by Mahadevamma was given to her during hearing.

The commission, while disposing of the petition by Chandrappa, imposed a fine of Rs. 5,000 on the Sedam tahsildar for denying information. During hearing, information sought for by Mr. Chandrappa was provided. In the other petition by Mr. Chandrappa, the commission asked the Sedam tahsildar to pay Rs. 3,000 as compensation for inordinately delaying information under the Act. The commission imposed a fine of Rs. 2,500 on Chincholi tahsildar for denying information to Mallikarjun Sulepet and asked the official to pay Rs. 2,000 as compensation to the appellant. In yet another case in which RTI activist Shaik Shafi Ahmed sought information on the guidelines for installing mobile phone towers three years ago, the commission imposed a fine of Rs. 3,000 on the then Public Information Officer Gurusab, who is retired now.

Commissioner warns officials against desisting from delaying information sought for by people under the legal provision

CONSUMERS

BUSINESS STANDARD, DEC 22, 2014

Government to revamp Jago Grahak Jago campaign

The campaign started in 2005 and is still running

Sanjeeb Mukherjee

The government's consumer awareness campaign, Jago Grahak Jago, is set to be recast.

As the government looks to revamp the Consumer Protection Act, originally of 1986, bringing in over 20 major amendments, the department of consumer affairs is also simultaneously planning to revitalise its marquee consumer awareness campaign. It intends to do so with the help of private advertising agencies and gurus.

[Jago Grahak Jago](#) started in 2005 and is still running. It might see a noted celebrity as brand ambassador, as cine star Amitabh Bachchan has been for the pulse polio campaign or [Aamir Khan](#) for 'Athithi Devo Bhava'. "We are looking at empanelling a fresh set of agencies for giving a new shape to the campaign and have also asked DAVP (the government's directorate of advertising and visual publicity) and others to work on this. Also, we are talking to private advertising agencies directly," a senior official said.

Amendments to the Act, include bringing e-commerce, direct selling and teleshopping in its ambit. The amendments will also facilitate mediation and arbitration between parties, to bring down the load of cases in consumer courts. Officials said the purpose was to ensure justice was delivered fast and at consumers' nearest point of contact. The amendments are expected to be placed soon for Cabinet approval. The government is also looking at starting weekend programmes on television, based on the campaign, with a storyline showing how consumers can assert their rights. Local self-help groups can be involved. Bijon Mishra, consumer rights activist, said there was an urgent need to revitalise the campaign, as people were not getting hooked to it any more. He said the campaign had become jaded over the years. "Some professionalism needs to be imbibed into the campaign, as it had become moribund over the years. More so when the government is planning drastic changes in the Consumer Protection Act, to further empower consumers, strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms, and include new items and services into consumer rights," the official said. A trial run of the new campaign is expected soon.

"There should be some innovation, some creativity in this important public awareness campaign, so that stereotypes do not set in," he told *Business Standard*.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 17, 2014

Planning Commission is dead, long live the new Plan!

NEW DELHI: It has commissioned 12 five-year plans and six annual plans involving fund outlays of over Rs 200 lakh crore in its 65-year-history, but the fabled [Planning Commission](#) is itself set to be history as the government gears up to replace it with a new-age institution in the new year.

The Plan Panel, as it is commonly known as, was set up by a simple government resolution in March 1950 and has withstood many political and economic upheavals, as also some occasional controversies, including those related to its poverty estimates as also about a huge toilet renovation bill and foreign tour expenses of its last Deputy Chairman.

It was a decisive mandate for a change of government during a politically and economically supercharged 2014 that finally led to its epitaph being written.

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) announced in his first Independence Day speech this August that the Commission would get a replacement, while speculation is rife that the name and structure of the new body may be revealed on the [Republic Day](#) next month.

In the process, most of the work at Yojana Bhavan, a few blocks away from the [Parliament](#), continues to revolve around the consultation and other procedures related to the setting up of the new institution, which the government wants to create as a more practical symbol of 'cooperative federalism'.

Experts and insiders say 2014 would certainly be one of the most important years in the history of Planning Commission, for not just being the last year of its existence, but also for being a period when this socialist-era institution had to struggle for a makeover to remain relevant in a market-driven economy.

While it went through numerous operational makeovers over the years of its existence, ranging from being a simple planning body to a powerful 'control-commission' to a fiscal decentralisation instrument to an official think-tank, the voices had begun to grow louder for an overhaul even before the new government took charge in May 2014.

The defeat of the last UPA government, however, led to immediate resignation of the Commission's Deputy Chairman, [Montek Singh Ahluwalia](#), who was at the helm of affairs for a decade, and other members in the last week of May.

Immediately thereafter, rumours began surfacing on the possible names of persons to head the Panel and continued till the big announcement was made by the Prime Minister,

who happens to be the Chairman of the Commission, on August 15 about the end of the road for Yojana Ayog.

Subsequently, a consultation process was launched for suggestions on the structure and role of the new body, while a lot many names, including the widely reported 'Niti Ayog' or Policy Commission have also come up in the public domain.

There is no official word as yet on the final structure, role or name of the new body.

It has been suggested that instead of a "control Commission", the new body should play the role of a catalyst and provide a platform to the Centre, states and experts to discuss issues and come out with the best solutions.

To take Chief Ministers on board, Modi also called a meeting earlier this month to deliberate on the structure of the new body, where most state leaders were said to be in favour of decentralisation of power and planning through it.

Congress-ruled states, however, had reservations about dismantling an institution which was set up by the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and they suggested restructuring of the existing body, rather than a complete replacement.

Incidentally, Nehru himself is said to have faced resistance to the idea of setting up of the Planning Commission, but it went on to become a major platform for successive governments to formulate and push forward economic policies and other development plans.

It was set up initially as part of the government's declared objectives to promote a rapid rise in the standard of living of the people by efficient exploitation of resources, increasing production and offering employment opportunities.

The Commission was charged with the responsibility of assessing all resources of the country, augmenting deficient resources, formulating plans for the most effective and balanced utilisation of resources and determining priorities.

The first Five-year Plan was launched in 1951 with total outlay of little over Rs 2,000 crore and two subsequent five-year plans were formulated till 1965, when there was a break because of the Indo-Pakistan Conflict.

Two successive years of drought, devaluation of currency, a general rise in prices and erosion of resources disrupted the planning process and after three Annual Plans between 1966 and 1969, the fourth Five-year plan was started in 1969.

The Eighth Plan could not take off in 1990 due to the fast changing political situation at the Centre and the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 were treated as Annual Plans. The Eighth Plan was finally launched in 1992.

For the first eight Plans, the emphasis was on a growing public sector with massive investments in basic and heavy industries, but since the launch of the 9th Plan in 1997, the emphasis on the public sector has become less pronounced and the current thinking on planning in the country, in general, is that it should increasingly be of an indicative nature.

The new year 2015 would again be keenly awaited by the experts to witness what replaces this long-standing structure and what changes does it bring to the way plans and policies are formulated and implemented by the new government.

EDUCATION

TIMES OF INDIA, DEC 18, 2014

Varsity staff retirement age raised to 62 in AP

HYDERABAD: The Andhra Pradesh cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal to increase the retirement age of teaching and non-teaching staff of all universities in the state from the present 60 to 62 years.

The cabinet also approved a proposal to increase the retirement age of teachers working in government-aided schools from the present 58 to 60 years.

The two decisions are set to benefit over 2 lakh employees working in school and higher education departments.

In other decisions, the cabinet meeting chaired by chief minister Chandrababu Naidu, cleared the draft Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) bill and decided to place it before the assembly on December 19. An initial sum of Rs 250 crore has been allotted for CRDA.

The cabinet approved some of the amendments proposed by the municipal administration department to ensure full powers to the CRDA on all civic matters related to the capital region. While the CM will be the chairman of the authority, municipal administration minister will act as vice-chairman and five IAS officers as members.

Apart from this, the cabinet cleared five bills to be placed before the assembly during the winter session. They include a bill related to change in tax structure on aviation fuel and amendments to the Forest Act to enable more stringent action against red sanders smugglers which, however, has to be sent to the Centre for approval. The bill aims at making the forest employees accountable for the smuggling activities as well as ensuring protection of valuable forest reserves.

The cabinet also identified 226 mandals as drought-hit and the list of such mandals is to be forwarded to the Centre for necessary financial help.

Rice procurement in the districts was reviewed by the cabinet and it was decided that paddy farmers will be allowed to sell their produce in the state after levy of nominal tax and central sales tax for sale in other states, including Telangana.

The two decisions are set to benefit over 2 lakh employees working in school and higher education departments

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 17, 2014

Dropout rate remains high among girls in Delhi

At the primary level, the number of girls per 1,000 boys has fallen from 881 in 2010-11 to 867 in 2013-14.

NEW DELHI: [Government schemes](#) and programmes designed to help girls continue in school aren't working. At the primary level, the number of girls per 1,000 boys has fallen from 881 in 2010-11 to 867 in 2013-14. At the secondary school level, it has fallen from 859 in 2010-11 to 840 in 2013-14. Only scheduled caste (SC) students have a healthy ratio—in the 900s or even more than 1,000—at middle, secondary and senior-secondary levels.

R Govinda, [vice-chancellor](#), National University for Educational Planning and Administration ([NUEPA](#)), however, doesn't see it as a failure of government schemes and policies, or even a long-term trend. He says enrolment at the primary level increased tremendously after [Right to Education](#) Act was implemented in 2010. "It'll take a few years for that change to show up in the statistics."

Govinda says more girls than boys drop out after finishing primary and middle levels, but those who enter secondary school usually stay on till the end. That isn't the case with boys, which may explain the increase in [sex ratio](#) from secondary to senior-secondary. In 2010-11 the sex ratio was 859 at secondary level and 881 at senior-secondary level; in 2013-14, it declined to 840 at the secondary level but increased to 896 at the senior-secondary level. This is not because of greater participation of girls but because boys have started dropping out by this stage.

"In Delhi, boys start dropping out when they move from municipal to government schools," says [Saurabh Sharma](#) of Josh, a city NGO that is also part of the [Right to Education Forum](#). "For five [feeder](#) municipal schools, there will be one government school. In that crowding, boys find it very difficult to survive. They may get out and start working." He says the problem is shortage of schools, not resistance from parents. He disagrees with Govinda on the effectiveness of government schemes. "Most parents don't even know how to apply for Ladli. There's no one to tell them what to do. People have no faith in schemes," says Sharma.

Why do SC students have a better sex ratio? Sharma can't explain that one. "Does this mean SC parents are more aware? I don't think so." Govinda says it could be because SC boys and SC girls drop out equally. The figures bear this out but only for 2010-11 when 12,747 boys and 13,836 girls transitioned to senior-secondary from 17,188 boys and 17,650 girls who were in Class X, and the sex ratio remained over 1,000. In 2012-13, the number of SC students increased from 77,470 in secondary to 81,853 in senior-secondary.

HINDU, DEC 16, 2014

Creating a global classroom

PHILIP G. ALTBACH

Internationalisation of higher education is a priority in much of the world. India needs to join the race, but it neither has world-class universities, nor an effective policy

The success of the Mars Orbiter Mission is yet another example of how India is approaching great power status. But the problem is that India generally does not act like a great power, nor does it have the necessary infrastructure. Let us take an example to demonstrate this: higher education. India dramatically under invests in its universities and colleges. Most large countries not only have world-class universities, but also an effective international higher education “foreign policy,” which some people call soft power. India has neither.

The establishment of Nalanda University and SAARC’s South Asian University are some small initiatives in the right direction. But are they sufficient when compared to India’s aspirations to be recognised on par with China’s rising global stature?

Internationalisation of higher education is at the forefront of academic thinking globally. Providing local students with some kind of international consciousness and knowledge is considered important for employment as well as citizenship in a globalising economy. Educating students from abroad helps bring international students to local classrooms and assist future cooperation, economic ties, and so on. Some countries such as the U.K., the U.S., and Australia earn significant sums from educating international students.

Many countries and academic institutions have elaborate strategies for internationalisation. The Americans have the Fulbright programme, which brings thousands of students and academics to the U.S. each year — and sends Americans abroad to study and engage in teaching and research. The German Academic Exchange Service offers similar programmes. Both China and Japan have national programmes to attract foreign students. The Saudi Arabia government sponsors a massive scholarship programme to send its students abroad to study. India has basically nothing.

Scholarships to foreign students

Although institutions like the Indian Council for Cultural Relations offers scholarships to foreign students, its scope is very limited. In 2013-14, the ICCR sponsored only 3,465 scholarships for foreign students to pursue undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes. In 2012-13, around 21,000 international students were pursuing higher education in 121 institutions in the country. India hosts around 30,000 international students compared to the 2,00,000 Indians studying abroad. Japan and China each have more than 1,00,000 international students, and the U.S. hosts more than 8,00,000. Most of India’s international students are from South Asia; regionalisation might be a better term than internationalisation. The large majority of non-Indian students study in private universities and are hardly represented in the public sector. Manipal University, a private university, stands first with an enrolment of 2,742 international students in 2012-13.

A few of the Indian public-funded universities seem to be unaware of the potential of attracting students from U.S. and European universities for short-term study to their campuses. Currently only a few Central universities such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, Hyderabad University, and Tata Institute of Social Sciences facilitate the short-term incoming student visit programmes. Since the fee charged to an international student is at least five to eight times higher than what is charged for local students, this could be an excellent source of additional revenue for the ailing state universities. Apart from generating additional revenue, foreign students promote diversity in university campuses.

However, the host universities would have to change some of the regulations with regard to credit transfer. The recent initiatives at the University of Kerala to issue academic transcripts similar to overseas universities could be a model for other universities. The initiatives undertaken by Mumbai and Pune universities to attract foreign students are also worth considering. Apart from credit transfer regulations, the host universities would also have to ensure many facilities to the foreign students in the form of orientation programmes, excellent hostel facilities, remedial courses, healthcare facilities, visa facilitation, and other services.

The number of Indian branch campuses functioning abroad has also increased. An offshore campus of Manipal University is in Malaysia and another private university, Amity, operates campuses in the U.S., U.K., China and Singapore. The presence of four Indian private institutions in the Dubai International Academic City also reflects this trend.

Another trend is the opening up of off-campus centres of Indian universities in countries where a sizable number of Indians are working. However, recently there were some reports in the media that the University Grants Commission had advised the Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala to shut down seven of its international off-campus centres because of violations of the UGC guidelines on the territorial jurisdiction of universities.

Internationalisation has so far not been integrated into strategic planning at the majority of Indian universities and colleges. Institutions alone cannot be blamed for this situation because currently India does not have a national policy governing the entry or operation of foreign higher educational institutions. Although the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill was introduced in the Indian Parliament in 2010 to regulate the entry and operation of foreign higher educational institutions, it failed to achieve sufficient consensus in Parliament and eventually lapsed.

Currently only a few Indian universities and colleges have significant alliances with foreign institutions for activities including development and delivery of courses, joint research, or the exchange of staff and students. Although new private universities and colleges are very active in promoting internationalisation through the adoption of foreign curriculum, twinning programmes, etc., their objectives generally have only a limited dimension — improve their market position through the promise of preparing students for the globally integrated economic environment.

There is a feeling that integration of foreign educational programmes into Indian institutions will provide an efficient way to improve academic quality and standards, which is not always true when it comes to realities on the ground. This collaboration is generally between a newly established private institution from the Indian side and a middle-grade institution from a foreign country. Most of the Indian institutions tout the presence of foreign faculty and placement assistance. The websites of some of the private institutions with foreign tie-ups boast that half of the faculty members employed by them are foreign nationals, which is not entirely true. Most of the foreign nationals work in their Indian partner institutions on a short-term basis. For these institutions, revenue generation is more important than educational quality. They see internationalisation as a method to attract more domestic students for ensuring a high return on their investments.

So far, there is no strategy for internationalisation despite the tremendous benefits that this could accrue to Indian higher education. Higher education internationalisation is a priority in much of the world. India needs to join the race.

(Philip G. Altbach is research professor and director of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, U.S. and Eldho Mathews is Consultant at the Ministry of Human Resource Development's National Higher Education Mission.)

Since the fee charged to an international student is much higher than what is charged for local students, this could be a great source of additional revenue for the ailing state universities

[HINDU, DEC 17, 2014](#)

A new imagination for Indian universities

C. RAJ KUMAR

Indian universities need a transformational change for them to become relevant in the context of global rankings of educational institutions

comprehensive PLAN: "The agenda of universities needs to be established by the faculty and students, keeping in mind the needs and aspirations of everyone." Picture shows engineering students in Hyderabad.— Photo: G. Krishnaswamy

The Times Higher Education BRICS and Emerging Economies Rankings 2015, which gives new insights into the performance and contribution of universities in BRICS and emerging economies, demonstrates a stronger and sharper attention to issues of quality and excellence to be paid by India.

These rankings give comprehensive data on 100 universities in 18 emerging economies of the world. The results have shown that out of the top 10 universities, three are from China, three are from Turkey, one is from Taiwan, one is from Russia, one from Brazil and one from South Africa. There is not a single Indian university in the top 20 universities. Only the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, ranks 25 on the list. This year's rankings have once again shown the extraordinary progress achieved by Chinese

universities. Turkey is another great example of a strong performer in this year's rankings; besides the three mentioned, eight institutions figure in the top 100.

Besides China, another performer has been Russia (seven Russian universities can be found in the top 100). There is a substantial focus on the importance of international rankings of universities among Russian universities and policymakers. There is also a significant impetus for capacity building to improve quality of education and to promoting excellence in all aspects of university governance.

In this context, Russia has embarked on an ambitious initiative called "Project on Competitiveness Enhancement of Leading Russian Universities Among Global Research and Education Centres." This is expected to be a transformational initiative for Russian universities to seek a stronger presence in global rankings.

Project 5-100 is a new initiative of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation government in order to support the best universities in the country. Its vision, says Alexander Povalko, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, is to "...support the best universities in Russia, with a desire to see at least five of them enter the top 100 of the leading global university rankings by 2020...Project 5-100 is a comprehensive academic excellence initiative that unites top-tier Russian universities behind the goal of deep transformation of the institutions according to the best international models and practices." There is a collective consciousness emerging within many universities to seek excellence that will ultimately help them fare well in international rankings.

The way forward for India

While India has 11 universities in the top 100, most of them have actually climbed down in this year's rankings. Indian universities need a transformational change for them to become relevant in the context of global rankings of universities. The last two decades have witnessed extraordinary changes in university systems around the world. India needs to take into account these developments and how they are affecting and impacting the nature of higher education around the world. The higher education system in India, including the university governance systems, needs to consider the following reforms and policy initiatives.

First, there is an urgent need to recognise that not all universities need to be engaged in the same manner on different aspects of institution building. They need to be treated differently depending on the kind of contribution they are making. Indian universities should not be differentiated based on whether they are public or private; the differentiation instead should be based on quality, performance and contribution with more resources being made available for universities that are performing exceedingly well. We also need to recognise that not all universities in India need to be research focussed, but they need to excel in other areas and should be measured for their quality and excellence on those focal areas of university development.

Second, taking inspiration from the Project 5-100 initiative, India could consider empowering 50 of its top universities in every possible manner to seek global excellence. For this there needs to be a clear mandate, with funding and resources given to these 50 universities to augment their capacities. While choosing them, policymakers should choose as their main selection criteria institutional diversity and the institutions' potential for achieving global excellence. Ten Central universities, 10 State universities, 10 private universities, 10 deemed universities and 10 institutions of national importance could be considered. This diversity will enable India to build strong capacity for establishing a few model institutions of excellence that can compete globally.

Third, the issue of regulatory reform has been the heart of policy reforms in higher education. There is an urgent need to seek a complete overhaul of the regulatory framework. Universities in India need to be made more autonomous; they need freedom, in every sense of the word, from both government and from regulatory bodies. The agenda of universities needs to be established by the faculty and students, keeping in mind the needs and aspirations of everyone in society.

Funding for research

Fourth, there is no doubt that world-class universities are built and nurtured with a strong focus on research. There is a need to substantially increase the amount of funding that is currently available for research in Indian universities. This aspect of policy seeks significant reform, both in terms of increasing the quantum of funding as well as in the policy and management framework of disbursing research grants. The existing framework to disburse grants is a multilayered and complex system and leads to frustration and inordinate delays among faculty members who are trying for grants. There is also a need to significantly incentivise research and publications among faculty members. The current system of faculty recruitment, appraisal, assessment, promotion and rewards is not necessarily based on performance as measured through research contributions and publications.

Fifth, it is important that we need to focus on internationalisation of faculty members and students within Indian universities. Almost all Indian universities have faculty members who are only Indian nationals. Universities in India are unlike most parts of the developed world and also many countries in the emerging economies, which hire faculty members from around the world. In a world that is globalised, knowledge creation and sharing cannot be limited because of nationality and place of origin. World-class universities have always attracted faculty and students from around the world. Indian universities need to learn from the experiences from other countries in BRICS and emerging economies.

There has to be a new imagination for Indian universities — one which draws inspiration from the past, but will also have to look to the future. Transformational change needs to take place at every level of policymaking, regulation and governance in higher education if Indian universities are serious about seeking global excellence and achieving higher rankings.

(C. Raj Kumar is the Vice Chancellor of O.P. Jindal Global University. He delivered the keynote address at the Times Higher Education BRICS and Emerging Economies Universities Summit that was held in Moscow on December 3-4.)

Universities in India need to be made more autonomous; they need freedom from both government and regulatory bodies

ENVIRONMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, DEC 16, 2014

Climate change: Nations must make sacrifices for greater good

The saving grace in the climate change talks at Lima has been that they were not a total disaster as they were threatening to be. The talks had started on a note of despondency. The atmosphere on December 1 was such that all were more or less sure nothing would come out of them. During the 13 days it was becoming the routine picture of the developed countries being pitted against the developing ones. The creation of groups such as 'like-minded developing countries' added to the vagueness, which was exemplified in the way the Philippines walked out of the grouping. However, the developing countries are said to have gained a victory with the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility' having been included in the final draft, taking into account the divergent development patterns. There was also the proposal of introducing a plan for an evaluation of emission reduction by developing countries. It has been dropped because it could not be linked to provision of finance by developed countries. However, the developed countries too had their share of victories. There was no roadmap laid down on finance and there was no obligation on their part as regards loss and damage.

One takeaway from Lima has been that India and China were on the same page on most of the issues. This is particularly reassuring because China has just signed a climate deal with the US and in terms of the pact China's emissions are supposed to peak by 2030. India has set itself no such target so far. Before the Paris meet at the end of 2015, all the countries are supposed to present their 'intended nationally-defined contributions', which are a set of binding targets they must set for themselves. These are as relevant as they could be problematic one year later. Remember the US did not sign the Kyoto Protocol in 1997? And one way to institutionalise climate change talks is to hold them in the way of WTO rounds of negotiations. The UN Framework for Climate Change Convention must examine the gains arising out of the Montreal and Kyoto Protocols.

Even at the cost of repetition, it should be stressed that climate change knows no boundaries. Hence all countries should think beyond themselves and long-term. Changes in weather patterns that affect one country today might affect another later. For example, an interesting feature in Lima was that learning to live with an extent of climate change was the concern of developing countries. But to what extent? The cost that looks small now may not be so 30 years later. And there is no point being sheepish now on the question of the growth vs environment debate. For the greater good of humanity, all must be prepared to make sacrifices.

FINANCE

BUSINESS STANDARD, DEC 16, 2014

Finance Commission files report to President

The 14th Finance Commission, headed by former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Y V Reddy, on Monday gave its report to the President's office.

The panel gave its views on the devolution of tax receipts from the Centre to the states between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2020.

The panel was appointed on January 2, 2013, to give its report by October 31 this year. But its tenure was extended till December 31.

The panel had sought two more months to examine financial projections and carry out consultations with the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana governments.

The panel was also asked to look into the Goods and Services Tax.

The commission's terms of reference also included the pricing of public utilities such as electricity and water in an independent manner and the sale of non-priority public-sector units.

LABOUR

HINDU, DEC 16, 2014

Curbing the trend of unpaid internships

In Britain, in 2014, we are compelled to debate whether people should work for free. Unpaid internships have become a pillar of the modern British class system, discriminating on the basis of wealth rather than talent. The system acts as a filter for entire professions, helping to transform them into closed shops for the uber-privileged. Not only are they exploitative, they effectively allow the children of the well-to-do to buy up positions in the upper echelons of British society. But, finally, it is possible — just possible — that this key means of rigging Britain in favour of a small elite faces its reckoning. Today, Labour shadow Minister Liam Byrne will return to his old school to set out the case for dealing with this national scandal. Despite some internal resistance, Labour's leadership are moving towards backing a four-week limit on unpaid internships.

According to the Sutton Trust, more than one in three graduate interns are working for nothing. At any given time, the charity estimates, 21,000 are working unpaid, although a 2010 estimate by the think tank Institute for Public Policy Research put the figure at 1,00,000. For those unable to rely on the Bank of Mum and Dad, such unabashed exploitation can be completely unaffordable. Unpaid internships are often gateways to professions such as law, the media and the tragically professionalised political world. Also, they are all too frequently located in London, one of the most expensive cities on Earth. The Sutton Trust estimates that a single person in London will have to cough up £5,556 for the privilege of undertaking an unpaid internship for six months.

For a generation facing a worse lot in life than their parents, this is a time of desperation. Hundreds of thousands of young people are out of work; many others have been driven into insecure or zero-hour employment; and around half of the recent graduates are trapped in non-graduate work. Such desperation is lucrative for many employers. They know that those with the means will do whatever they can to get their foot in a door which has been slammed in the faces of so many others. After all, more than half of employers surveyed refuse to give jobs to graduates with no prior work experience.

The public has little doubt that unpaid internships are a wealth bar. According to polling by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 74 per cent of Britons believe that a young person in their family could not afford to take up an unpaid internship. Yes, there are many reasons why the apex of society is such a stitch-up for the pampered and privileged, but the internship filter is certainly one of them. More than half of the top 100 media professionals attended a fee-paying school, even though just 7 per cent of Britons overall did; and 43 per cent of newspaper columnists were educated in the private sector. This is not just an unjust waste of talent, but helps to ensure that the media reflects the opinions, prejudices and priorities of a gilded elite.

Many unpaid interns wish to remain anonymous out of a fear of damaging their careers, but their experiences are telling. Take one woman who won a month-long internship with a leading Sunday newspaper. "Because the internship was unpaid and I'm from Leicester,

not Chelsea, I could only afford to stay for one week and got very little out of it,” she says. She now works in press management.

Apologists for unpaid internships sometimes mount the following defence: if the non-privileged are real go-getters, they will spend their every remaining hour slogging away in bar jobs to support themselves. What a society they condone, where those without money must work themselves half to death in order to even be considered for a job in a top profession.

These unpaid internships should be illegal — and by that, I mean under existing law. As Intern Aware, a group that has done more than anybody to fight this national scourge, point out, under employment law if you “work set hours, do set tasks and contribute value to an organisation” you are a worker and are entitled to a minimum wage. And yet a YouGov survey found more than eight out of 10 businesses who used unpaid interns admitted they undertook useful tasks.

HMRC, the department responsible for enforcing the law, has been “totally ineffective,” says Intern Aware’s Ben Lyons. So it took matters into its own hands, encouraging former unpaid interns to take their employers to court to recoup wages they should have been paid. But this is no solution. “If the primary reason you’re doing an internship is to get a reference or get a new job, you won’t do that,” says Lyons. “There’s no real way under the existing law that the vast majority of internships will come forward.”

Change may now be afoot, however. As well as a hardening of the Labour line on internships, this debate is, for one, coming to the House of Lords. Yet a curbing of unpaid internships would be a real blow to Britain’s entrenched class system. What an opportunity: it must not be missed.

PIONEER, DEC 17, 2014

TO MARK VAJPAYEE’S B’DAY, GUJ WILL GIVE ‘SHRAMJIVI CARD’ TO LABOURERS

The Gujarat Government’s Ministry of Labour & Employment will celebrate former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s 89th birthday by issuing ‘Shramjivi Card’ (Labour Card) to more than one lakh unorganised labourers on the Christmas Day. The card holders will be covered under various Central and State Government schemes as well as protected by insurance cover of Rs1 lakh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also announced to observe December 25th as ‘National Good Governance Day’ to mark Vajpayee’s birthday. On that day, the State Government will be organising 20 ‘Shramjivi Kalyan Melas’ (Labour Welfare Fairs) in different cities to kick-start campaign to register unorganised labourers and issue them ‘Shramjivi Card’.

“Gujarat is the first State in the country to launch such card for unorganised labourers. The idea is to give them benefits of various schemes run by the Central as well as the Gujarat Government. Besides, Labour & Employment department will have a database of

such labourers, which will be utilised to enhance their skills for better jobs for them,” said Labour & Employment Minister Vijay Rupani to The Pioneer.

According to Rupani as of now the State Government has database of nearly 15 lakh unorganised labourers who are working in saltpan, MGNREGA, construction industry, agriculture, manufacturing etc. “As per an estimate, there are around one crore unorganised workers in the State. We want maximum number of such labourers to be registered with us, so they can get benefits of various Government schemes as well as insurance cover,” said the Minister.

The State Government has organised Shramjivi Kalyan Melas at Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Godhara, Bharuch, Nadiad, Amreli, Surendranagar etc. The Government is planning to organise such melas time to time to issue Shramjivi Cards to maximum labourers.

Rupani said the Gujarat Government wants labourers to get benefits of schemes like Rashtriya Mazdoor Suraksha Yojana, Mukhya Mantri Amrutam Yojana, Jan Dhan Yojana etc. “The State Government is paying Rs5 crore insurance premium for accidental death of labourers. Surprisingly, families of very few labourers are able to get benefit of it. This card will create awareness among them,” he said.

Those labourers residing in Gujarat, irrespective of their native places, would be eligible to avail ‘Shramjivi Card’, he said, adding that they will have to produce residence proof and Aadhar Card as identity. “The database of unorganised workforce will have win-win effect for industry too. The Labour and Employment department aims to give training to such labourers in future, so that they could earn better,” he added.

LIBRARIES

HINDU, DEC 18, 2014

Sanskrit library inaugurated

The newly inaugurated Sanskrit library at Jhandewalan in Delhi on Wednesday. Photo: Sushil Kumar Verma

A Sanskrit library that was sanctioned during the previous Congress-government in Delhi was inaugurated here on Wednesday in the presence of Sanskrit scholars, young students and academicians. The library at Jhandewalan, which boasts of a vast collection of books including the Vedas, Upanishads, Samhitas and other rare works, aims to grow into becoming a research facility in the Capital.

The proposal for the facility was approved in 2012, said Delhi Sanskrit Academy secretary Dharmender Kumar, adding it was former Education Minister Kiran Walia who approved the project.

The work was carried out by the Public Works Department at a cost of Rs.1.85 crore and was inaugurated by Delhi Government Art and Culture Secretary Geetanjali Kundra.

Mr. Kumar said there are 60 lakh manuscripts in the country out of which 30 lakh manuscripts are written in Sanskrit language. "We will do our best to gather these manuscripts of Sanskrit and document them in this library," he said.

POLICE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, DEC 23, 2014

Police stations may soon have officer for school security

[Rajesh Ahuja](#)

All police stations in the country may soon have a dedicated police officer to deal with security of the schools in its jurisdiction, sources told HT.

“Continuing with its efforts to provide better security to schools all across the country in the wake of Peshawar attack, the centre will again write to all states to identify a police officer at the police station level to coordinate with schools on regular basis,” said a Union home ministry official requesting anonymity.

According to the details available with HT, the police officer will regularly visit all schools in his jurisdiction to interact with school authorities and parents as well. “The officer will conduct security audit of schools and he or she will be kind point-person at the level of police station for school managements to deal with security or even traffic issues. The idea is to institutionalise the mechanism to provide better security to schools,” said the official.

He further added that a coordinating police officer may help schools to prepare for only terror attacks but other crimes like kidnapping and eve-teasing as well.

After the terror attack on a school in Pakistan’s Peshawar, in which more than 130 school children were shot dead, Union home ministry has issues an advisory earlier as well.

In the earlier advisory, states were asked to ensure that each school should have concrete boundary wall, with three to four gates and each gate should be manned by at least three guards on a 24-hour basis. The guidelines further added that details of telephone number of the Police Control Room and local police station should be maintained and updated regularly by the school authorities.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 17, 2014

Govt to come out with six-month 'report card'; PM Modi directs ministers to submit details of their performances

The six-month report, being prepared by different ministries, is expected to showcase policy initiatives like 'Jan Dhan Yojana', 'Make in India Campaign' and 'Kisan Vikas Patra' among others.

NEW DELHI: Government is planning to come out with a six-month 'report card' and [Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) has directed all ministers to submit details of their performances and achievements by this month end.

The six-month report, being prepared by different ministries, is expected to showcase policy initiatives like 'Jan Dhan Yojana', 'Make in India Campaign' and 'Kisan Vikas Patra' among others.

According to sources, the ministries have been given the month-end deadline to submit details of their achievements in the form of an e-booklet and a video clip.

Though the government has not yet decided how it would like to showcase its six months achievements before the nation, the emphasis would be to mass-scale publicity at the grass-root level.

"It is not decided so far whether the government will hold press conferences or use social networking platform to talk about its achievements. But ministers and MPs have been told to distribute booklets in their respective constituencies to widely inform about the government's policy initiatives at the grass-root level," a source said.

The plan to highlight the achievements of the government assumes importance for [BJP](#) as several states are heading for assembly polls and bypolls.

Earlier, to mark 100 days in office, the Modi-led [NDA](#) government had held series of press conferences and other events to highlight the achievements in various social and economic sectors.

PRIME MINISTERS

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, DEC 22, 2014

Narendra Modi has given people a sense of faith: Amartya Sen

SUMMARY

Food security programme, Nrega need revamp, says Nobel laureate Amartya Sen at Express Adda.

Despite differences over secularism and social cohesion, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for imparting a sense of kinetic energy to the economy and highlighting the need for toilets in the country.

As the guest at The Indian Express event, Express Adda, on Saturday evening, Sen also clarified his stance on government subsidies and said the term must be “unpacked” to distinguish between essential national services, such as public education and healthcare, and subsidised cooking gas and diesel.

Sen warmed the evening with his staggering range: from how he took Mike Brearley to his “quietest” New Year Eve in Calcutta to how Sanskrit has 16 words for ‘justice’, each with a different nuance. Those who braved the December cold to listen in included former RBI governor YV Reddy, actor Sharmila Tagore, BJP’s Lok Sabha member from Mumbai Poonam Mahajan, designer Rajeev Sethi, Raheja group chairman Navin Raheja, chief economic advisor Arvind Subramaniam, Brookings India director of research Subir Gokarn, Population Foundation of India’s Poonam Mootreja, economist AK Shiva Kumar, Rajiv Luthra, artist Jatin Das, former CEC Navin Chawla, adman Suhel Seth, Mark

Tully and entrepreneur Ramola Bachchan.

“I am critical of Mr Modi but I have to say he has given a sense of faith to people that things can happen. It may not be in exactly the same way that I would have liked to have happened... I think it is quite an achievement... It is a compliment but our differences on secularism and other things don’t go away,” he said, adding that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was not able to give that impression that things can happen (in the second term of the UPA).

A Bharat Ratna awardee by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 1999, Sen is the Thomas W Lamont University Professor and Professor of Economics and Philosophy, at Harvard University now. He is one of the biggest critics of the Prime Minister and had even said he does not want Modi to lead the country due to his lack of secular credentials. In a two-hour conversation moderated by contributing editor Pratap Bhanu Mehta and deputy editor Seema Chishti, Sen also said the Prime Minister highlighted the need for toilets in his Independence Day speech.

“I was delighted that for several years I was writing about open defecation and how toilets are needed. This is the second thing I am praising about Mr Modi now... that on top of the Red Fort, he shared many good things, one of which was the absence of toilets and the other was the fear women suffer from... not much has been done but at least it is being talked about now,” he said.

While praising former PM Manmohan Singh as an economist, Sen, who was also his student at Cambridge, said had Singh stepped down after the first term, he would have been a very successful PM.

On the issue of subsidies, Sen said he did not favour diesel and cooking gas subsidies, but added the state must provide essential national services such as healthcare and education. Pointing to the example of the British National Health Service and the American system of public education, he said, “These are essential services and putting them in the same word as subsidising cooking gas or diesel is a huge mistake. The ability to distinguish between essential services the state has to provide is important,” he stressed, adding that by attacking these, we prevent the state from providing these essential services. Pointing out that power and cooking gas subsidies were “huge mistakes” of the previous government, he said the new government has worked on removing these, helped by lower fuel prices.

He also stressed that India’s food security programme as well as the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act scheme needed to be re-worked.

“On food security, there was a lot of criticism from those supporting the government, but the government has actually fought with the WTO to keep food security on and that itself

is a good policy though it has to be redone,” he said, adding that similarly while there is need for an employment scheme, its current organisation is “very bad and is strongly in need of reform.”

He, however, criticised the NDA government for its failure to recognise India’s multi-cultural and multi-religious identity. “To me the biggest issue is that the central government hasn’t looked into the issue of social cohesion and culture... it is such a central recognition throughout Indian history,” he said, adding that the issue of environment protection and clean energy must also be looked into.

Jumping into the debate on growth versus development models, Sen argued that no country in the world has succeeded in maintaining high economic growth just on the basis of physical capital while having unhealthy people and uneducated citizens and workers. “The argument that a poor country or state can’t provide universal education and healthcare is very bad economic reasoning,” he said while responding to a question.

Sen, who along with Jean Dreze had co-authored the book ‘An uncertain glory: India and its Contradictions’, had attracted a fair share of criticism from some for its advocacy of government spending on subsidies and welfare programmes.

But referring to the example of Kerala, which was the third poorest state in the country when it started a programme for providing universal healthcare and education in 1962, Sen said it has now become the state with the highest income, according to NSSO data. “Gujarat, which has the second highest income is always touted as the highest Indian state (state with highest income),” he said.

Providing these universal services for education and healthcare result in a rise in income, he argued, adding that even states like Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which moved partially towards such policies, are among better off now.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS STANDARD, DEC 22, 2014

More governance, less government

Ending dual regulation and improving transparency in decision-making are key to improving the health of public-sector banks

Manojit Saha & Somasroy Chakraborty

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) had promised 'minimum government, maximum governance' during his successful election campaign earlier this year. The slogan appears apt for the country's government-owned banks, where [governance](#) standards continue to remain fragile.

From appointments of top executives to board-level deliberations and loan sanctions, there is lack of transparency in most decision-making processes. Governments change but how they run the [public sector banks](#) remains the same.

Several factors are responsible for governance difficulties in state-run banks. Dual regulation by the Union [finance ministry](#) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the opaque process of appointing boards, short average tenure of top executives and significant compensation differences with private sector banks are some of the issues that need immediate attention.

"The challenge with public-sector banks is that with all the advantages of location, brand and human resources, they will lose their competitive advantage in the absence of sound, long-term management that can lead with vision and integrity. Good governance unfortunately is not a good-to-have requirement. It goes to the core of your organisation's ability to succeed and build and sustain value," Shinjini Kumar, leader - banking and capital markets at PwC in India, said.

Weak governance has led to lower productivity, erosion in profitability, deterioration in credit quality and hurt competitiveness in public sector banks. "If the governance of these banks continues as at present, this will impede fiscal consolidation, affect fiscal stability and eventually impinge on the government's solvency," a committee chaired by PJ Nayak (former chairman and chief executive of Axis Bank), tasked with reviewing the governance of bank boards in India, said in its report to the [RBI](#) in May 2014.

While private-sector banks are free from dual regulation, state-run lenders often have to abide by the directives of both RBI and the finance ministry. Consider this: Between

October 2012 and January 2014 the finance ministry issued as many as 82 circulars to public-sector banks.

The issue of [government](#) interference in the functioning of state-run banks is a tricky one. A few believe such interference is essential to drive financial inclusion and sustain credit flows to priority sectors of the economy. But it also has its perils. There is now extensive research and documentation that indicates that lending by public-sector banks is often politically induced, leading to an increase in loan delinquency rates.

GOVERNANCE DIFFICULTIES IN PUBLIC-SECTOR BANKS

Dual regulation by the finance ministry and the Reserve Bank of India

Politically-induced lending, leading to bad-loan accretion

Faulty process of appointing boards of directors

Short average tenure of top management and delays in appointing senior executives

Poor quality of board deliberations

Wide compensation differentials with private banks, leaving scope for individual misconduct and lower productivity.

"It is a fundamental irony that presently the government disadvantages the very banks it has invested in," the [Nayak Committee](#) report said.

Globally, it is a mixed practice. While in lower-income countries governments interfere in the functioning of banks through direct ownership, in developed economies governments tend to stay away from direct governance of mainstream banks and rely on regulators.

Experts also criticise the process by which directors are appointed to public-sector bank boards. Often, criteria for such appointments are not clear. Politicians, petrol-pump owners and television anchors can be found on the boards of state-run banks.

"It is well established that the quality of governance has a positive correlation with the overall performance of any organisation. Instilling more transparency, reinforcing a culture of good governance across hierarchies combined with the right tone at the top are important steps in this journey. Public-sector banks should focus on developing an agenda which increases long-term value through better governance mechanisms," Himanish Chaudhuri, partner - risk consulting at KPMG in India, said.

The government plays a key role in the appointment of top executives. Chairmen and executive directors in public-sector banks are appointed by a government-constituted selection committee, which is headed by the RBI governor. (Typically, the governor nominates one of the deputy governors on the committee.) The committee also includes the financial services secretary in the finance ministry.

TABLE 1: ALLEGED MISCONDUCT BY SENIOR EXECUTIVES OF PUBLIC-SECTOR BANKS

Bank	Executive	Designation	Case
Indian Bank	M Gopalakrishnan	Former chairman and managing director	Sanctioning large loans, flouting norms, causing loss to the bank in the early 1990s. Convicted.
UCO Bank	KM Margabandhu	Chairman and managing director	Involvement in the securities scam masterminded by Harshad Mehta in 1992. Convicted.
State Bank of India	V Mahadevan	Managing director	Involvement in the securities scam masterminded by Harshad Mehta in 1992. Convicted.
Syndicate Bank	Sudhir Kumar Jain	Chairman and managing director	Allegedly took bribes for sanctioning loans to companies in 2014. Arrested.

While the selection committee shortlists candidates, the finance ministry does have a strong opinion on the selection. Only after the finance ministry's go-ahead are names sent for the approval of the appointments committee of the cabinet.

This process results in appointment delays. For instance, the positions of chairman and managing director in eight public-sector banks are currently lying vacant, some of them for almost a year. The average tenure of the chairman is also short, leaving them with not enough time to implement their ideas in practice.

"At present, bankers get appointed to top management positions a little too late in their careers for them to have adequately long tenures. These top management positions are contractual, and end at the age of 60 or after two years, whichever is later. While some officers do get longer tenures, most do not," the Nayak Committee noted, suggesting that chairmen of government-owned banks should have tenures of at least five years and executive directors tenures of at least three years.

The faulty appointment process leads to poor quality of board deliberations. A scrutiny of board notes suggests that public-sector bank boards focus inadequately on long-term strategy and areas of concern. There is a general absence of calibrated discussion on non-

performing assets, which continue to remain an area of concern for lenders.

The Nayak Committee found that in one bank the taxi fare reimbursement policy got the same coverage in board discussions as the bad-loan recovery policy. There are also examples where state-run banks have discussed details of a lecture by a bank chairman at a college, plans for extensive coverage of the finance minister's visit to a branch and probable disciplinary action against manager-level employees in their board meetings.

Wide compensation differentials at senior levels of public and private banks are also blamed for poor governance in state-run banks. Consider this: In 2012-13, the average monetary compensation for CEOs of new private banks was Rs 3.21 crore. In addition they received stock options, whose monetary value is dependent on the bank's stock price. Compared to this, the average monetary compensation for chairmen of public sector banks was Rs 18.66 lakh. Many believe that productivity suffers because of such wide variations in remuneration, and sometimes it encourages individuals to commit malpractices.

Earlier this year, [Sudhir Kumar Jain](#) - the now-suspended chairman and managing director of [Syndicate Bank](#) - was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation for allegedly having accepted a bribe of Rs 50 lakh from Bhushan Steel. He was accused of granting credit extension to the company despite it having defaulted on repayment of loans amounting to crores of rupees. Jain was also believed to be negotiating with other private companies, including Prakash Industries, for similar illegal gratification.

"There is a need to improve the compensation structure. I have known many bank chairmen for the last two decades, and I find those who were really honest are the ones who are struggling to buy a house in a metro city after retirement," Ashvin Parekh, managing partner of Ashvin Parekh Advisory Services LLP and senior expert adviser for global financial services at Ernst & Young, said.

TABLE 2: PERFORMANCE OF TOP PUBLIC- AND PRIVATE-SECTOR BANKS IN 2013-14

Figures in %

Particulars	State Bank of India	Bank of Baroda	Punjab National Bank
Net interest margin	3.17	2.36	3.44
Return on assets	0.65	0.75	0.64
Net non-performing asset ratio	2.57	1.52	2.85
Capital adequacy ratio	12.44	12.28	11.52

Particulars	ICICI Bank	HDFC Bank	Axis Bank
Net interest margin	3.33	4.4	3.81
Return on assets	1.76	2.0	1.78
Net non-performing asset ratio	0.82	0.3	0.4
Capital adequacy ratio (Basel III)	18.34	16.1	16.07

Source: Banks

Industry analysts also claim that in public-sector banks the chairman remains the key decision-maker, leaving scope for individual misconduct. While in theory large advances are approved by a credit appraisal committee, in practice few question the chairman's decisions, fearing that it will compromise their promotion and impede career progression.

Experts suggest a complete overhaul of the system to improve the state of governance in public-sector banks. "Given the pressures on capital, growth and accountability, weaving risk-intelligent behaviour into the fabric of a

bank's culture is likely to become a differentiator for a mature governance programme. Banks may need to manage governance by multiple actions, including creation of steering committees, effective challenge processes, quality controls, automated data management and risk-based governance mechanisms. Upgrading both technology as well as skill-sets will be top priorities of these banks, which would give an additional edge to the underlying governance systems put in place," Monish Shah, senior director at Deloitte in India, said.

At a time when the government is looking to sell its stake in these banks, which will help it to rein in the fiscal deficit, a professionally-run bank can get the right valuations. Clearly, it is in the government's own interest to loosen its control on its banks and leave the management to professionals.

TRIBUNE, DEC 18, 2014

Good governance daily

Avoid needless controversies, stick to issues that matter

The promise of good governance is what brought Narendra Modi to power, so observing one day of the year as Good Governance Day in the country does not make much sense. Choosing the day of Christmas celebrations for it makes even less so. And is invoking Atal Behari Vajpayee's name to justify the move, since December 25 is his birthday, more a service or a disservice to a man who would most probably have balked at the idea? The HRD Ministry's retreat, after a furore over its circular asking educational

institutions to hold various events on the day, made for better reading than the original text.

More than the content, it's the intent of the government that has come under scrutiny. While some Christian organisations see in it a divisive agenda, for most people, the very idea of being asked to show up, or forgo leave, or make a customary appearance on a 'holy day' in the holiday season defies logic. What would taking a pledge in such a way amount to? On a sarcastic note, such is the distrust that government officials have managed to accumulate for themselves over the years that the sight of them being forced to go to office, work or no work, on a closed day in the biting cold would delight several Indians, but surely that cannot be the purpose behind the decision. The controversy over observing the Good Governance Day on Christmas has not only wasted the precious time of Parliament, but also served as a reminder to the government to respect the overwhelming mandate it received at the hustings and avoid needless controversies. Leave aside the choice of the day, good governance every day is what is expected of it, not symbolic gestures which, besides leaving a sour taste, also give rise to issues that can only be an impediment to governance, not an aid. Celebrate Vajpayee's contribution to the nation by all means, but in a way that unites, not divides. That celebrates, not questions.

TELEGRAPH, DEC 19, 2014

Turbulence ahead

- Narendra Modi must shift the BJP's centre of gravity to governance Swapan Dasgupta

The past fortnight has witnessed a series of conflicting trends in the political arena that has seemingly jeopardized the clarity that was expected after the categorical verdict in last May's general election.

First, on the economic front -and despite the apprehensions of some overzealous backers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi - the government appears to have moved quite decisively. Apart from the popular achievement of having achieved near-zero inflation that was also a consequence of spectacular good fortune - the sharp fall in global oil prices - there has been positive movement on one of the government's stated objectives: improving the ease of doing business in India. From managing a broad agreement on the contours of the much-delayed goods and services tax to introducing a note of pragmatism in the ministry of environment, the Modi government appears to have largely satisfied the lofty expectations of the markets that had suffered from a prolonged bout of depression.

Naturally, much more needs to be done if the improvement in the ease of doing business in India translates seamlessly into success for Modi's Make in India policy. Domestic capital is particularly anxious that the Reserve Bank of India governor, Raghuram Rajan, modifies his inflation fundamentalism and effects a significant lowering of interest rates to prop up a sluggish manufacturing sector. There has been a difference of opinion between Rajan and the ministry of finance but this divergence has, so far, been marked by gentlemanly behaviour on both sides and hasn't contributed to an ugly spat. Industry is also keen that the finance minister, Arun Jaitley, act on his professed commitment to modify some of the more non-monetary dimensions of the neo-Luddite land acquisition bill that was enacted by the Manmohan Singh government in its last year.

Regardless of the formidable challenges in the path of India realizing its true economic potential, it is heartening that the prime minister has not lost sight of the government's principal task. In this context, Modi's speech to the BJP parliamentary party on December 16 was significant. Angry with colleagues who had been speaking out of turn and raising extraneous issues in public, the prime minister had to remind MPs that they had been elected to raise people's living standards, create opportunities and transform India into a global power of consequence. He was clear that he could not deviate from this agenda, not even if he wanted to.

Modi's outburst was occasioned by an emerging trend that, apart from disrupting Parliament repeatedly this winter session, has attracted speculation over the 'real' agenda of the Bharatiya Janata Party government.

To a modest extent, the furore in Parliament over Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti's utterances at a public meeting, the *ghar wapsi* programme planned by Hindu groups in Aligarh, and the non-holiday for Kendriya Vidyalayas over Christmas was a result of media activism. The BJP cannot be entirely faulted for nurturing a conspiracy theory that the traditionally hostile and loosely left-liberal leaning English language media will do its utmost to show the government in a poor light. Yet, while over-playing the utterances of loose cannons does distort the big picture, the government has to be mindful that there are tensions within the wider *parivar* over what constitutes the primary agenda of the Modi government.

The larger consensus is that the electorate reposed its faith in the leadership on two counts. The Indian voter believed that Modi's personal attributes - his fanatical dedication to a work culture and his decisiveness - were an answer to a decade of weak and unfocussed leadership. There was, at the same time, a shared confidence over Modi's unwavering development agenda. As a rule, and unlike Western democracies, Indian voters don't like being cluttered with policy details and prefer generalities, leaving the leadership to attend to the nuts and bolts. The generalities that found favour, however, had very little to do with either questions of identity and assertive nationalism.

In a large country, however, there are significant departures from aggregation. The BJP, like most mass parties, isn't really cadre-based when it comes to electoral politics. However, it is undeniable that the greatest chunk of its activists - the *karyakartas* that

figure so prominently in the party's political imagery- have a broad commitment to Hindu nationalism. The BJP's victory in May and the good showing in the Maharashtra and Haryana assembly polls have convinced some of the more marginalized sections of the *parivar* that the moment has arrived to press ahead with an ideological reorientation of the country. Viewing Modi as an instrument of convenience, this section is anxious to take advantage of a friendly Centre to press ahead with its pet schemes. Hitherto, Modi has placated this fringe with token, inconsequential sops such as appointments in bodies linked to education, but they now want more.

It would seem that the experience of the winter session of Parliament is likely to trigger an internal rejig in the BJP. With the Opposition having a numerical upper hand in the Rajya Sabha- and this disadvantage will persist until late-2016 - it is now clear that important economic legislation will have to be negotiated every inch of the way. The Opposition has realized that it possesses the ability to blackmail the government and it will be reluctant to relinquish that advantage. This, in turn, implies that Modi's political managers will have to use a combination of persuasion and threat to keep the hotheads in check. In the longer term, Modi will have to shift the political centre of gravity in the BJP towards development and governance. The moves to making BJP membership more open - membership through a missed call - constitutes a small step. In the short term, Modi will have to find imaginative solutions to the possible problem of matching the priorities of activists with those of the average voter.

Economic growth presupposed a large measure of social stability; radical ruptures necessitate social turbulence. It is difficult to reconcile both, except through a process of regimentation that is so very un-Indian and even un-Hindu.

The final trend that has the potential of creating a political byway is the re-emergence of Islamist terrorism in a virulent form. It may be unduly alarmist to suggest that either the lone wolf attacks in Ottawa and Sydney or the ghastly massacre of schoolchildren in Peshawar could be replicated in India. At the same time, it is impossible to underestimate the grotesque impact of the brazen cruelty that is the hallmark of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria on dysfunctional minds. The Bengali Muslim man arrested in Bangalore for operating a pro-ISIS twitter handle may well be a loner, disinclined to pick up a gun. But there are nearly 100 or more Indian citizens who have signed up with the ISIS in the war zone, and not all of them are engaged in cleaning lavatories - as the lone defector was. The possible impact of their bravado on the impressionable fed on a diet of victimhood is a source of worry.

Security in India is uneven and the government is likely to step up efforts to plug as many loopholes as possible. This exercise is certain to give priority to pre-emptive policing, a phenomenon that creates localized tensions and a sense of victimhood - the aftermath of the Burdwan blasts being a case in point. For the Modi government, the next few months are certain to be challenging. The government seems clear on its priorities but there are significant roadblocks that have to be negotiated calmly. It is important to ensure that subterranean currents remain firmly underground and don't create diversions from the path the electorate voted to travel down.

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 17, 2014

Government to provide facility of biometric authentication in FPSs

A pilot project will be taken up within a month wherein 50 FPS will be provided Tablet PCs with biometric authentication facility and printers.

NEW DELHI: Soon ration card holders of New Delhi and Rohini would be free to buy their ration from any [Fair Price Shops](#) in these circles with the [Delhi government](#) working on the FPS portability project.

The Food and Consumer Affairs department has decided to automatize the operations of all the Fair Price Shops (FPS) and put in place the facility of biometric authentication of beneficiaries before disbursing ration.

"The Department has decided to take up a project for automating the operations of all the FPS. This will bring transparency in their functioning and enable us to put the information about sale of ration to beneficiaries in public domain.

"There will be facility of biometric authentication of beneficiaries before disbursing ration. This will effectively curb any attempt of diversion of foodgrains by the FPS licensee," said S S Yadav, secretary-cum-commissioner of the food and supplies department of Delhi Government.

A pilot project will be taken up within a month wherein 50 FPS will be provided Tablet PCs with biometric authentication facility and printers.

"These FPS will be in circle 40 (New Delhi) and circle 13 (Rohini). Once the facility of biometric authentication will be set up in all the 50 FPS, people of these areas would be free to buy their ration from any FPS in these circles," said Yadav.

Funds for the project will be provided by [Unique Identification Authority of India \(UIDAI\)](#). Project report has been submitted to [UIDAI](#) and is likely to be approved soon, Yadav said.

Implementation of the project will be through CSE e-gov Services India Ltd. CSE eGov Service Ltd will facilitate provision of banking, insurance, ticketing, bill collection and other services through FPS which will improve their viability.

Incentive based financial model will be used in this project wherein FPS licensees will be given monetary incentive for per kg ration sold through online system.

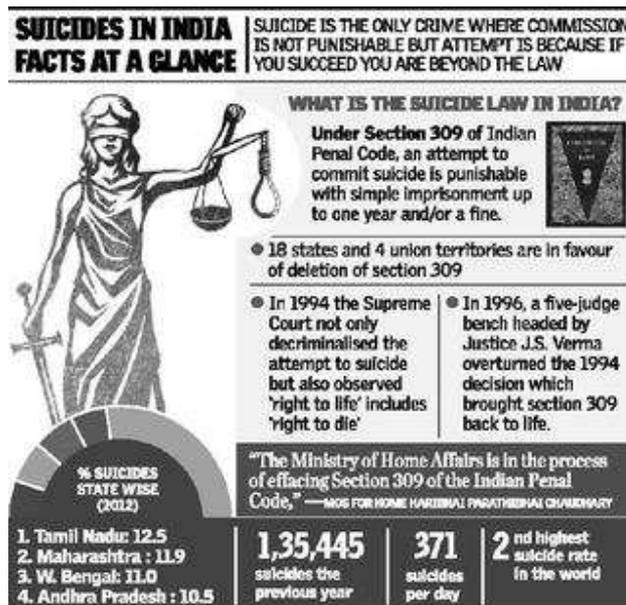
SOCIAL PROBLEMS

HINDU, DEC 17, 2014

Debating the 'right to die'

FAIZAN MUSTAFA

Attempt to commit suicide should stay on the statute book because suicide comes in conflict with the monopolistic power of the state to take away life



You choose your country, you choose your spouse, you choose your profession, you choose your political masters, and you choose where you want to live and how. Die you must. But how to die and when: should that be a matter of choice as well?

India has the highest suicide rate in the world after China. Last year, 1,35,445 people killed themselves — every four minutes someone ends his or her life in India or 371 suicides take place per day. Tamil Nadu tops the list followed by Maharashtra, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. In view of these alarming figures, the decision of the Narendra Modi government to decriminalise attempts to suicide needs thorough examination.

Issues for introspection

Isn't it really barbaric and cruel to punish a person who fails in extinguishing his 'more-miserable-than-death' life by putting him in prison? If the state cannot provide a person with humane living conditions, can it be just in restraining his right to die? These are issues which need serious introspection. Continuation of Section 309 is considered an anachronism unworthy of human society in the 21st century.

It is shocking to note that suicide rates are highest in southern States which are richer and more developed with better literacy, social welfare and health care. The rise in suicide

rates is due to disappointments as a result of unmet expectations of achievement and new technologies like mobile phones. Social networking sites contributing to loneliness also lead to breakdown of family units traditionally relied on for support during distress.

The Narendra Modi government has initiated the process to decriminalise attempt to suicide, a move that will ensure that people who are driven to kill themselves do not end up in jail if they don't succeed. Commission of the crime is more serious than attempts of the same. Suicide is the only crime where commission is not punishable but attempt is. This is because if you succeed, you are beyond all laws. "The Ministry of Home Affairs is in the process of effacing Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code," Minister of State for Home Haribhai Parathibhai Chaudhary told the Rajya Sabha. As many as 18 States and four Union Territories are in favour of deletion of Section 309, he added. The tenth Law Commission in its report has also favoured such a deletion. The move is justified because suicides are committed during temporary loss of soundness of mind and insanity, as such is a complete defence even for killing other human beings. Section 309 is also arbitrary as it paints all suicides with one brush and makes no room for the particular circumstances.

In 1994 the Supreme Court not only decriminalised the attempt to suicide but also observed that the 'right to life' includes the 'right to die.' The court strangely observed that all fundamental rights have positive connotations as well as negative connotations. Thus freedom of speech included right to silence, freedom to do business includes freedom not to do any business. Similarly the right to life includes the right not to live. But then decriminalising attempt to suicide is one thing and conferring a right to die is another. Right to silence or right not to do business or trade constitutes merely temporary suspension of rights and on any future date a person may exercise these rights. But once a life is extinguished, it is lost forever. In 1996, a five-judge bench headed by Justice J.S. Verma overturned the 1994 decision which brought Section 309 back to life. Attempt to suicide should stay on the statute book because suicide comes in conflict with the monopolistic power of the state to take away life.

Suicide is not something new or unknown to civilisation. It has definitely been part of human behaviour since the dawn of civilisation. Humanity has been confronted with this problem of self-destruction since then. It is argued that no individual has complete autonomy with respect to life. His family does have a claim over him. The 'right to die' is based on a conservative and individualistic argument whereby suicide is considered a private affair which in no way can cause damage to others. But this logic is certainly false as far as most of us are concerned. A person may be the sole bread winner of his family and if he commits suicide, his family would certainly be driven to destitution. The holding of a 'right to die' is in accordance with a capitalistic, property-oriented outlook which prefers to treat everything including the human body, organs and even emotions as a form of commodity.

Flawed reasoning

The so-called 'right to die' was also justified in the name of 'globalisation of Indian economy.' The divisional bench in its 1994 decision observed that the view taken by

them would advance not only the cause of humanisation, which is a need of the day, but of 'globalisation' also, as by effacing Section 309 we would be attuning this part of our "criminal law to the global wavelength." This kind of reasoning clearly ignores the peculiarities of the social and economic conditions of our country and the rapid increase in suicide rates in general and that of dowry deaths in particular. The better option is not to punish anyone for attempting suicides but the law may be allowed to remain on the statute book as the chances of abuse of its deletion are very high, particularly by mother-in-laws or even by children in case of elderly parents. Suicide and mercy killing are different and should not be confused as one and the same. In the former no third party is involved but in the latter the third party is crucial. We should certainly have a law permitting euthanasia, but not suicide.

(Faizan Mustafa is the Vice-Chancellor of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad.)

The better option is not to punish anyone for attempting suicide but the law may be allowed to remain on the statute book as the chances of abuse of its deletion are very high

TERRORISM

DECCAN HERALD, DEC 18, 2014

Terrorism targeting children is diabolic

Terrorism is always reprehensible as it involves violent attacks on unarmed civilians. But on Tuesday, it touched new levels of depravity and bestiality when the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) went on killing spree in Peshawar, slaughtering 132 children and their nine teachers inside a school. Children were systematically executed; several were shot dead at point-blank range.

A teacher was burnt alive before her pupils. It is going to take Pakistan, particularly its children, a long time, if ever, to recover from this horror. Children will be scared to go to school and parents terrified to send them there. This is not the way it should be. Children have the right to go to school and to learn, play and make friends in a secure environment. As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon pointed out, “Going to school should not have to be an act of bravery.”

The TTP has sought to justify this attack as “perfect revenge” for the Pakistan military’s operations in Waziristan recently. The terror attack on the school run for children of army personnel was aimed at causing “pain” to the military, its spokesman said. However, the children were not accidental victims in the war. The TTP fighters intended to kill children and had made elaborate plans to execute their plan. It is the deliberate nature of the violence unleashed on children that makes the attack all the more diabolic and deplorable.

The larger goal behind the attack on schoolchildren was to terrorise the Pakistani government into calling off its military operations against the Pakistan Taliban. That, however, is unlikely to happen. The attack hit the armed forces personally and where it really hurts – its children. The coming weeks are likely to see a stepping up of military operations against the TTP. But carrying out raids on its hideouts is not the way.

A more comprehensive approach is needed, one that sees action against all forms of extremism and violence, whether directed against Pakistani nationals or others. The infrastructure of terrorism in Pakistan needs to be dismantled. The attack on the Peshawar school has evoked nationwide revulsion against the TTP and its methods. Parties across the spectrum have condemned the attack.

Many in Pakistan and abroad are hoping that the Pakistani government will move away from policies that nurture terrorism in the neighbourhood. Peshawar and Pakistan have seen extreme violence before but none as disturbing as this attack on children. It is a wake-up call that Pakistan will ignore to its peril.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 17, 2014

ISIS banned in India: Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh

Singh gave credit to families from minority community for discouraging their children from getting influenced by the terror group.

NEW DELHI: The dreaded [ISIS](#) terror group has been banned in India, Union [Home Minister Rajnath Singh](#) disclosed today, days after a Bangalore techie was allegedly found tweeting in support of the terrorist organisation.

"We have banned this organisation (ISIS) as a first step. I will like to inform (the House) that the group has been banned under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act," he said during the Question Hour.

The Home Minister said the group has been proscribed under the provisions of UAPA that relates to organisations listed in the Schedule to the U N Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism (Implementation of [Security Council](#) Resolutions) Order, 2007 made under section two of the [United Nations](#) (Security Council) Act, 1947 and amended from time to time.

Noting that the government took cognisance immediately after ISIS activities began to spread in different parts of the world, Singh said ISIS has been prohibited.

There is "negligible" support from Indian youth for ISIS, Singh said it cannot be said with guarantee about whether they are involved with ISIS or its activities.

He gave credit to families from minority community for discouraging their children from getting influenced by the terror group.

Singh also assured the [Lok Sabha](#) that no innocent person from minority community would be taken into custody with regard to suspected terror activities and if there are such instances, these can be brought to his notice.

"Parents of youths, who come from minority community, are discouraging their children (from coming under influence of radicalism). I appreciate it," Singh said.

Further, he said that minorities in many countries are encouraging ISIS.

Singh made the remarks while responding to queries about the threat of ISIS in India and steps taken by the government in this regard.

It is a fact that some of our youth followed ISIS but it is "negligible", the Minister said.

"We are very much concerned about the activities of ISIS ... We are taking all steps to contain it," he said.

Besides, the government assured the House there is not much to worry about the prevailing situation.

Responding to a query on ISIS influence in India, [Minister of State](#) for Home Kiren Rijju said the matter is "very, very sensitive" and the details cannot be discussed in the House".

"There is nothing much to worry... We need not very much worry about the prevailing situation," he noted.

A series of actions are being taken by the government including augmenting capacity of NSG and tightening of immigration control, among others.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS STANDARD, DEC 16, 2014

Vinayak Chatterjee: What is a 'smart city'?

Here are 10 attributes that may well describe a smart city

Vinayak Chatterjee

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has certainly focused India's attention on the [urbanisation](#) imperative and got the "smart city" concept buzzing. As things stand, the urbanisation agenda is in three parts:

- urban renewal of 500 cities;
- rejuvenation of heritage cities (like Varanasi), and
- the implementation of 100 smart cities; understood to be both "greenfield" and "brownfield".

While renewal and rejuvenation are relatively easier to grasp, there appears to be only an evocative imagination in the public mind as to what the contours of a [smart city](#) could be.

So, here are 10 suggested attributes that may well describe, and to some extent define a smart city.

(i) Information, communication, and technology (ICT)-enabled governance: The international and domestic big daddies of the information technology (IT) world have, with their aggressive presentations, virtually hijacked the smart city definition to only mean IT-enabled administration and governance. While such a restrictive definition is undesirable, enabling [ICT](#) is clearly one of the more important planks. Often referred to as "smart government", the use of integrated technology platforms that are easily accessible across various devices is certainly key to providing access, transparency, speed, participation and redressal in public services. For example, on December 10, 2014, the President launched the Karnataka Mobile One app in Bengaluru that would provide citizens a range of e-governance services over mobile phones.

(ii) [Efficient utilities](#) - energy, water, solid waste and effluents: This area is often the most talked about after IT. Smart meters, renewable energy, energy conservation, water harvesting, effluent recycling, scientific solid waste disposal methods et al are all clearly the hallmark of a smart city.

(iii) Meaningful PPPs: The creative use of [public-private partnerships](#) (PPPs) is a key attribute of the smart city concept. [PPPs](#) are to be used not only as a source of much-needed capital but also for the efficient delivery of utilities with agreed service-level

standards. PPPs could range from health care to street lighting; and be used wherever there is a clear connection between the provision of a service and the ability to charge for the same - directly or even indirectly.

(iv) **Safety and security:** This aspect is high in public consciousness, especially with disconcerting news on the safety of women, road rage, robbery attacks on the elderly and juvenile delinquency. Clearly, networks of video-cameras, brightly lit public areas, intensive patrolling and surveillance, identity-verified access, and rapid response to emergency calls are all on the expectations list.

(v) **Financial sustainability:** The 74th Amendment to the Constitution (1992) enjoins towns and cities to "take charge of their own destinies". Nowhere is this more important than financial independence. This is only possible with elaborate and extensive tapping of all sources of revenue - property taxes, advertisements *et al*; coupled with astute collection of user-pay charges across the full range of utilities. **It** also has to do with the elements of fiscal discipline that would enable the raising of long-term debt like municipal bonds.

(vi) **Citizen-participative local government:** The enthusiastic participation of citizens in local issues needs careful designing of electoral and participative fora. The current apathy towards civic elections needs comprehensive reversal.

(vii) **Sufficient social capital:** Smart cities cannot be devoid of the appropriate levels of social infrastructure - like schools, hospitals, public spaces, sporting and recreational grounds and retail and entertainment venues. Along with a brain that works, and hands and legs that move, it must also have a heart that beats to the joys of daily living.

(viii) **Transit-oriented habitats:** "Walk-to-work" is the dream solution here. Nevertheless, conveniently networked public transportation with first- and last-mile connectivities in place, reduced motivation to use personal vehicles, use of electric cars, and bicycle paths are all in the expectation matrix.

(ix) **Green features:** Minimising the carbon footprint and eco-friendliness are *de rigueur*. Parks and verdant open spaces, absence of pollution, use of renewables, conservation and recycling are mandatory.

(x) **Minimum population criteria:** Towards the end of November 2014, Panasonic Corporation announced the opening of its new business vector - the sustainable smart town (SST) at Fujisawa in Japan. It has rooftop solar energy, electric cars and electric-

powered bicycles. However, it comprises only 1,000 homes over 47 acres that will have a population of 3,000 people. This kind of project is at best a smart enclave, and clearly, in the Indian context, cannot be included in the definition of a city. India has 5,545 urban agglomerations. Class 1 towns (called cities) are those with a population of 100,000 and above. This should be the minimum population cut-off for a smart city.

Achieving all the 10 attributes may well be Utopian. So, maybe even if seven out of the 10 attributes are achieved, we should have no hesitation in declaring an urban habitation as a smart city.