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## AWARDS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, DEC 24, 2014

### **Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Madan Mohan Malaviya to be conferred with Bharat Ratna**

Former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and freedom fighter-educationist Madan Mohan Malaviya will be conferred with the country's highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna, the Centre announced on Wednesday.

The announcement was made on the eve of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stalwart's birthday on December 25. The day will also be celebrated by the central government as 'good governance day'. He will turn 90 on Thursday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will send a recommendation for the Bharat Ratnas in the afternoon to President Pranab Mukherjee, reports said.

According to reports, a final decision to honour Vajpayee and Malaviya was taken at a meeting held by PM Modi which was attended by top BJP leaders including Union ministers Arun Jaitley, Sushma Swaraj, Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh and party president Amit Shah.

The BJP has been demanding the Bharat Ratna for Vajpayee for the last five years.

When the UPA government announced the Bharat Ratna for former cricketer Sachin Tendulkar and scientist CNR Rao last year, the BJP had criticised the Congress for ignoring Vajpayee's contribution to the nation.

Vajpayee will be the first leader from the country's political right to be conferred the honour.

Lal Krishna Advani, Vajpayee's friend and colleague for many decades, was the first to demand a Bharat Ratna for him. Vajpayee's Bharat Ratna also ends the long gap of a politician getting the highest civilian of the country.

Vajpayee is long considered as the tallest leader of the BJP. He was the first non-Congress prime minister who led a coalition government through its full term. While his first government in 1998 could last just 13 days, he was the pivotal force behind the National Democratic Alliance that ruled between 1999 to 2004.

Vajpayee is also perhaps the only BJP leader who draws scores of admirers cutting across political lines and was often dubbed as "the right man in the wrong party" by political opponents.

Bharat Ratna to Malaviya adds an interesting political twist: Malaviya was once the national president of the Congress party. But the renowned educationist is also considered as an icon by the Sangh Parivar. ??

PM Modi had promised to confer the Bharat Ratna to Malaviya during the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. The Banaras Hindu University, founded by the educationist, is in the PM's constituency in Varanasi.

Recipients receive a certificate signed by the President and a peepal-leaf shaped medallion. The award does not include any monetary grant.

Instituted on January 2, 1954, Bharat Ratna has been conferred on 43 individuals. Eleven recipients were awarded posthumously.

## CIVIL SERVICE

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 31, 2014

### **Maharashtra government officials can undertake only 3 foreign trips a year**

The state's austerity drive will be extended to civil servants, functionaries of statutory boards and public undertakings as well.

MUMBAI: With the state exchequer reeling under debt, the [Maharashtra](#) government has decided to impose a three-foreign trip a year restriction on its officials.

According to a [government resolution](#) (GR) issued by the general administration department, the number of days stipulated for each tour will not exceed 15 days and the chief minister's approval will be required for each tour.

"Any official who wishes to travel abroad will have to submit details on the kind of tour being undertaken, number of officials in the delegation, the place to be visited, persons to be met and details of stay during the tour," the GR stated.

The state's [austerity drive](#) will be extended to civil servants, functionaries of statutory boards and public undertakings as well.

The GR also stated that proposals of officials who are not related to the tour and are even travelling on their own expenses, accompanying officials, will not be entertained.

Tours conducted to seek any information which can be sought through video conferencing facility or which is publicly available, should be avoided, it said.

According to the rules prescribed by the state government, any official who wants to undertake a foreign tour should first apply with their respective department's secretary, following which the proposal will be forwarded to a special committee headed by the Chief Secretary.

After being cleared by the special committee, the proposal will be forwarded to the chief minister for approval.

And finally a clearance from the Union government's relevant ministry will be compulsorily required before an official can undertake an official tour.

"Officials in their final year of service will be barred to undertake any tour. It has also been decided that ministers and secretaries are prohibited from travelling at the same time," the resolution said.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 30, 2014

### **Government forms committee for cadre restructuring of CSSS**

The committee is mandated to assess magnitude of stagnation in various grades of CSSS and suggest remedial measures, to reduce promotional blocks.

NEW DELHI: An inter-ministry committee has been constituted for the cadre restructuring of Central Secretariat Stenographers' Service (CSSS), which caters to the stenographic requirements in the central secretariat and attached offices.

The committee is mandated to assess the magnitude of stagnation in various grades of CSSS and suggest remedial measures, both short and long term, to reduce promotional blocks and at the same time prevent gaps from building up, an order issued by the [Department of Personnel and Training](#) (DoPT) said.

It will suggest measures to enhance the effectiveness of service and capacity building of its members and to review the structure of CSSS cadre so as to harmonise the functional requirements with the career expectations of its members, it said.

The committee will be headed by Establishment officer and Special Secretary in DoPT and will have Joint Secretary (Central Secretariat, DoPT, Joint Secretary (Personnel)) in Department of Expenditure as members. A Director (Central Secretariat-II) in the DoPT will be Member Secretary to the committee.

The total sanctioned strength of CSSS is 6,760 and it comprises personnel working at the level of Sr PPS, PPS and PS among others.

TRIBUNE, DEC 29, 2014

### **Now, babus to declare foreign account details**

All Central Government employees will now have to declare details of deposits in foreign bank accounts, which includes those of their spouses and children, under the new rules notified under the Lokpal Act.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has notified a new form for the employees to declare details of their assets and liabilities, along with that of their spouse and dependent children, which is mandatory under the Lokpal Act.

"Details of deposits in foreign bank(s) to be given separately," the notification said.

The new form has been issued after concerns were raised by some employees regarding putting details of their assets and liabilities in public domain. However, the government is still mulling whether such details should be made available to public, official sources said.

The employees will also have to inform separately in case of any investments of over Rs 2 lakh made in movable assets, insurance, bonds, shares and mutual funds in the new form.

"Investment above Rs 2 lakh to be reported individually. Investments below Rs 2 lakh may be reported together," it said. Earlier, the limit was Rs 1 lakh.

In the latest form, employees need to declare expensive furniture, fixtures, antiques, paintings and electronic equipment also.

As per the Public Servants (Furnishing of Information and Annual Return of Assets and Liabilities and the Limits for Exemption of Assets in Filing Returns) Second Amendment Rules, 2014, a public servant shall file the returns of his assets and liabilities, including that of his spouse and dependent family members, for the current fiscal by April 30, 2015.

Under the rules, all Group A, B and C employees need to declare such details as on March 31 every year on or before July 31 of that year. For the current year, the last date for filing these returns was September 15, which was later extended to December-end and now till April next year.

The declarations under the Lokpal Act are in addition to similar ones filed by the employees under various services rules. — PTI

## **Box**

### **New form**

The Department of Personnel and Training has notified a new form for the employees to declare details of their assets and liabilities under the Lokpal Act

The form has been issued after concerns were raised by employees regarding putting details of their assets and liabilities in public domain

HINDUSTAN TIMES, DEC 30, 2014

**MEA wants all diplomats to master Hindi**

**Jayanth Jacob**

Diplomats have to brush up their Hindi, or pick up proficiency in the language, as government is putting in place measures to promote the official language in all Indian missions and posts.

The external affairs ministry is taking a few steps to promote Hindi. To begin with, a special module 'use of Hindi in offices' is being made a part of the training programme for officers posted abroad.

With Modi government giving a definite push for the promotion of official language, all missions and posts will have Hindi software in their offices. Then all private secretaries and personal assistants should undergo compulsory Hindi language training before being posted abroad. The logic behind this particular step, sources said is to ensure the staffers who often act as the first line of communication between officers and commoners, who reach out to the mission, are well versed in the national language.

The stenographers are being trained in Hindi as well. Officials have already started making file noting "increasingly" in Hindi. And it has also become more common to have senior officials getting their visiting cards printed in Hindi too. There will be regular workshops on Hindi language.

"Promotion of official language remained a policy of Indian government for years now. But mostly it remained confined to celebration of Hindi diwas. But now there is a thrust on promoting Hindi in a more elaborate manner," said an official.

TIMES OF INDIA, DEC 26, 2014

**Deadline extended for officials to declare assets**

[Bharti Jain](#)

On September 8, the government had extended the September 15 deadline for its officers to declare their assets and liabilities to December 31.

NEW DELHI: The government has further extended the deadline for public servants to declare their assets and liabilities under the Lokpal law, by four months.

As the department of personnel and training (DoPT) works on revised formats for submission of statements regarding movable properties as well as regarding debts and liabilities, babus who have filed property returns under the existing service rules will now be required to file the revised returns under Section 44 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, by April 30, 2015.

On September 8, the government had extended the September 15 deadline for its officers to declare their assets and liabilities to December 31. Accordingly, it had amended the Lokpal & Lokayuktas (Removal of Difficulties) Order, 2014, to extend the time limit for carrying out necessary changes in the relevant rules relating to different services from 270 days to 360 days from the date on which the Lokpal & Lokayuktas Act came into force.

Babus who have filed property returns under the existing service rules will now be

required to file the revised returns under Section 44 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, by April 30, 2015.

"...the last date for filing of revised returns by public servants under the rules...has been extended by a period of four months, i.e., from December 3, 2014 to April 30, 2015," said a DoPT note issued on Thursday.

It said the formal amendments to the Public Servants (Furnishing of Information and Annual Return of Assets and Liabilities and the Limits for Exemption of Assets in Filing Returns) Rules, 2014 and the Lokpal & Lokayuktas (Removal of Difficulties) Order, 2014, would be notified separately.

**READ ALSO: [Bureaucrats in a fix over valuing family jewels](#)**

"The formats for submission of statements regarding movable properties (Form II) and for submission of statements regarding debts and liabilities (Form IV) under the said rules are also being revised and will be notified as part of the amendments to the aforesaid rules," the DoPT said adding the new formats will be uploaded soon on its official website.

**READ ALSO: [Govt unlikely to heed babus' complaints on assets information](#)**

"All ministries/departments and cadre authorities are requested to kindly issue orders towards ensuring compliance with the revised rules by all officers and staff...under their control, within the revised time-limit," the DoPT said in the note addressed to all secretaries to the Government of India and all state chief secretaries/UT administrators.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 24, 2014

**Centre: No plan to ask staff to report to work on December 25**

By Bharti Jain

Even so, parliamentary affairs minister M Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday insisted that no one would be forced to observe December 25 as 'Good Governance Day'.

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Tuesday denied any plan to ask its staff to mandatorily report to work on December 25, a gazetted holiday in view of [Christmas](#), but said all ministries and departments may conduct their own events to mark former Prime Minister A B Vajpayee's birthday as 'Good Governance Day'.

"The personnel ministry is not contemplating issuing any formal circular to all Central ministries and departments on how to celebrate Good Governance Day... it is up to the individual ministries and departments to celebrate it as they like," minister of state for personnel Jitendra Singh told TOI.

An officer, however, remarked that the very fact that individual ministries and departments were expected to organize functions on [Good Governance Day](#) meant that babus would be left with little choice but to report to work on December 25.

Even so, parliamentary affairs minister [M Venkaiah Naidu](#) on Tuesday insisted that no one would be forced to observe [December 25](#) as 'Good Governance Day'. At the same time, he added that all Central ministers would attend public functions in their respective states and all MPs shall visit their constituencies to mark the occasion.

A senior home ministry official shared with TOI that while Union home minister [Rajnath Singh](#) was set to visit Lucknow on December 25 to preside over public functions to mark Good Governance Day, MoS Kiren Rijiju and H P Chaudhary would do the same in Arunachal Pradesh and Banaskantha (Gujarat) respectively.

Sources in the government indicated that the department of reforms and public grievances (DARPG), which comes under the personnel ministry headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was contemplating putting out advertisements in national and regional dailies on December 25, conveying the government's message of "good governance" to all citizens.

Naidu said people were free to celebrate December 25 in "whatever manner they like". Yet, with entities like department of electronics and information technology (DeitY) announcing a function-cum-seminar between 10.45 am and 5 pm on December 25, babus in the department may not have much choice but to attend the function where their minister, Ravishankar Prasad will be the chief guest.

## CONSUMERS

BUSINESS STANDARD, DEC 25, 2014

### **Maha govt dissolves Consumer Welfare Advisory Committee**

The [Maharashtra government](#) has decided to dissolve the [Consumer Welfare Advisory Committee](#) as it “failed” to shoulder responsibilities given to it.

The Consumer Welfare Advisory Committee was set up on May 10, 2001.

“The state government had expected the (Consumer Welfare Advisory) committee to recommend solutions to motivate consumers and ensure justice to them. The committee was expected to spread government schemes to rural areas as well,” a government resolution had on Wednesday said .

“The committee has failed to meet the expectations and, hence, the government has decided to dissolve it,” the resolution said. With the dissolution of the panel, the appointment of its chairman Suryakant Gawli also stands cancelled.

Gawli had recently demanded separation of the Consumer Welfare Advisory Committee from the state food and civil supply department.

Gawli, appointed by the earlier United Progressive Alliance government, had also conceded that everything was not hunky-dory with consumer forums and committees in the state and an overhaul was needed.

## **DISASTERS**

DECCAN HERALD, DEC 30, 2014

### **Develop NDMA into a trained force**

The government has done well to reconstitute the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) with the induction of professional talent and experience into the working of the body.

The NDMA had become an ineffective white elephant as it was dominated by politicians and retired bureaucrats who had no knowledge of its functions and responsibilities.

It was constituted under an Act of parliament after the 2004 tsunami to coordinate responses to natural and man-made disasters and to build capacities to deal with them.

With the prime minister as the chairman, it was meant to be an important body at the national level to take immediate mitigation, relief and rehabilitation measures in disaster-hit areas. But the functioning of the NDMA has invited much criticism whenever it was called upon to act in such situations.

One main reason was the absence of the right leadership. A minor state-level politician was the vice-chairman and former civil servants and intelligence officials were members. It has rarely met, though it was expected to meet once in three months.

The reconstituted body has a professional look with experts who have domain knowledge in various areas of disaster management as its members. One new member is a Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) scientist with expertise in radiation-related areas, another is an advisor on disaster reduction at the UNDP and a third is an army officer with experience in disaster relief operations.

The new body has the task to formulate guidelines, develop contingency plans and evolve training packages which are needed in dealing with disasters. Much of the disaster relief operations in the country are undertaken by the army whose primary responsibilities and expertise are however different.

The glaring inadequacies of the NDMA had become obvious during last year's floods in Uttarakhand and this year's rain-related havoc in Kashmir. The army did stellar work on both these occasions but that underlined the need for a separate disaster management system.

In a vast country like India, disasters are common in some or other part of the country. Efforts to handle them are mostly ad hoc now. There is the need for a system with expertise, authority and resources to handle such situations to reduce loss of lives and property and also to prevent them.

The national disaster relief force has to be developed into a trained force with equipment and resources to be deployed immediately when the need arises. There is also the need for an efficient and dedicated communications network. Hopefully the reconstituted body will work to develop these facilities and strengthen the national capacities in this neglected area.

## EDUCATION

ASIAN AGE, DEC 30, 2014

### **Teachers' body plans 'School Wapsi' for dropouts & poor**

The Akhil Dilli Prathmik Shikshak Sangh (ADPSS) has planned to launch a pilot project, "School Wapsi Abhiyaan", to enrol dropped out students or who have never visited schools due to poverty and other reasons. The programme will be launched on January 23 in two municipal wards — Zakir Nagar and Nizamuddin — of South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC). The ADPSS will extend the project in all the municipal wards after the success of the pilot project in these two wards.

"Despite being Right to Education (RTE) Act in force, large number of children never attended school or left it midway without completing their school education," ADPSS vice-president Arvind Mishra told this newspaper. "Through 'School Wapsi Abhiyaan', we are trying to bring back these children to schools," he added.

As per the initial plan, central zone unit of the ADPSS will launch the abhiyaan on trial basis in ward number 205 (Zakir Nagar) and ward number 154 (Nizamuddin) of the SDMC. The programme would be extended in the remaining municipal wards if the organisation's efforts bring fruitful results in enrolment of dropped out students or those who have never visited schools due to poverty, child abuse or child labour.

The ADPSS has also directed all teachers affiliated with the organisation to identify such children in their areas. "As a teacher, their responsibilities also include bringing back these children to school apart from holding protests against the authority for fulfilment of their demands," added Mr Mishra.

The teachers would also coordinate with the local RWAs and citizens to identify such children. After identifying children, the teachers would meet their parents and try to convince them to send their wards to schools. "Teachers will explain the importance of education and also inform the poor parents about several scholarship or facilities, like free books, uniform and midday meal provided in schools," he said.

PIONEER, DEC 26, 2014

### **'INDIA CAN BE VISHWA GURU'**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called for producing quality teaching staff and developing an educational system that does not produce robots but helps in developing overall personality of students. He said India should evolve an educational culture which can help the country play the role of "Vishwa Guru" (universal leader) in the 21st century.

The PM was speaking at Swatantrata Bhawan in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Thursday after laying the foundation stone for Inter-University Centre for Teachers Education, launching the Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and

Teaching, and inaugurating the three-day cultural festival “Sanskriti”, artisan upgradation programme “Yukti” and wi-fi campus in the university.

Modi said history is witness to India’s pivotal role in the forming and spreading wisdom and played a universal leader. “The present era, being considered as an era of knowledge, our role and responsibility have increased. We have to emerge universal leader not only to give new direction to the world but also to protect our own heritage,” he said.

“The 21st century is the century of knowledge and India has the responsibility to make its contribution. It is the demand of time,” he said, while addressing a function at Banaras Hindu University here as part of Good Governance Day celebrations.

“My experience as Prime Minister in the last six months says that the whole world is looking up to India with expectations. The world is ready but we are not ready,” he said.

He advocated the introduction of a five-year training course after schooling for those aspiring to pursue a career in teaching and said the country should aim to export top-class teachers across the world.

Modi said an environment needs to be created for producing teachers who are rooted in the country’s culture and tradition and can be exported in lakhs as there is a large demand globally.

Modi said lives of all great people tell us that their mothers and teachers played important roles in their growth, and this is why we want to strengthen our teachers’ education system by starting five-year graduation course in teaching after intermediate as was recently done in law courses. He said that such course should comprise all areas, including child psychology, science and behavior, etc.

He also said that yoga is our old tradition and today the entire world has accepted its importance in living a balanced life. He appealed to the people to develop specialised centres that may attract tourists to Varanasi.

“Tourists come here to offer prayers at Kashi Vishwanath temple and take a holy dip in the Ganga. If they find some centres of their interests, they would stay here for long time. In turn it would increase the income of the loca,” he added.

The PM also highlighted the advantage of his cleanliness drive. He said a poor person can save at least Rs 7,000 a year which he is spending on medicines. Modi appealed to artistes to stage plays and programmes to create awareness among the people towards female foeticide, malnutrition and others.

TIMES OF INDIA, DEC 31, 2014

**HRD ministry to launch 3-year integrated BEd**

[Swati Mathur](#)

LUCKNOW: The Union ministry of human resource development has decided to introduce an integrated three-year BEd and a two-year MEd programme. Speaking to TOI, HRD minister of state Ram Shankar Katheria said a decision in this regard was expected by the first week of January . The integrated bachelor's and master's courses, he said, would be available to students with effect from the next academic session.

"The country faces an acute shortage of teachers at the primary , secondary and high school levels. The idea of introducing an integrated programme is to enable those interested in teaching to move into the profession without having to give an extra year to be trained as teachers," he said. Under the new system, a student would be able to opt for the three-year BEd programme after class XII. Currently , a one year BEd programme can only be pursued after graduation.

The Centre has already proposed a change to the existing BEd programme increasing its duration from one year to two years before this. To implement this, the government has asked for a declaration of guidelines for the two-year programme. Katheria, himself a professor of Hindi at Agra University, also expressed concern over the poor conditions prevailing in central and state-run universities in Uttar Pradesh.

"In a central university like the one in Allahabad, there is no VC. Basic infrastructure like proper sanitation and hostel facilities are lacking. This needs urgent attention," he said. The minister also said he had proposed a meeting between MHRD, UP governor Ram Naik, and all vice-chancellors of the five central universities in UP, where matters concerning the overhaul of the universities would be taken up.

"The idea is to have a twoday session with MHRD officials and all other stakeholders present so that we can have exhaustive discussions about measures to improve the prevailing conditions, including appointments of VCs and registrars where there are none," Katheria said.

[HINDU, DEC 29, 2014](#)

#### **DU eases PhD norms for defence personnel**

Delhi University has made amendments, according to which scientists working at certain departments will not be required to take study leave for pursuing their PhDs.

Scientists and professionals working at defence and space institutions and aspiring to pursue doctoral studies at Delhi University will now be able to do so while continuing with their full-time jobs.

Delhi University has made certain amendments in the rules for research courses, according to which scientists and professionals working at certain departments will not be required to take study leave for pursuing their PhDs.

"The amendment in Ordinance VI-B exempts scientists and professionals from fulfilling the requirement of study leave and course work which are prerequisites for pursuing PhD at Delhi University," Malay Neerav, DU's media coordinator and joint dean of welfare, told *PTI* .

As per the earlier rules, researchers could enrol with Delhi University only after they were granted two-year study leave by their employers. There was also a requirement of completing course work for at least one semester.

“Both the norms have been eased for the researchers falling under the category. A notification was issued by DU after the decision was approved by the university’s Academic and Executive Council,” he said.

“The move came after DU signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Defence Research and Development Organisation in which a large number of institutes dealing with defence research are clustered and areas like engineering, physics, chemistry, life sciences and computer sciences are included,” said Mr. Neerav.

An official notification issued by DU read, “In order to advance research in strategic areas of national concern, scientists/professionals working at defence and space institutions of the Central or the State government and with whom the university has signed an MoU will be allowed to pursue PhD while working in their organisations.”

“However, the aspirants will have to pursue their PhDs on subjects that are of concern to their departments . It will be important to have an approval from the Departmental Research Committee as well as DU’s research council,” Mr. Neerav said, adding that “the move would not only facilitate the professionals to pursue PhD while continuing with their jobs, but also contribute to DU’s knowledge bank”. — PTI

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 31, 2014

**HRD ministry suspects irregularities, urges President to seek explanation from Dinesh Singh**

By [Ritika Chopra](#)

The HRD ministry took cognisance of a ‘white paper’ released alleging financial and administrative irregularities in the varsity’s functioning.

NEW DELHI: Even as a controversy rages over the resignation of IIT-Delhi's director, the human resource development ministry is said to be pushing for the ouster of the head of another prestigious educational institution, Delhi University. This, despite the overtures that [Vice-Chancellor Dinesh Singh](#) has been making toward members of the [Sangh Parivar](#) ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition came to power in May.

Those bridge-building attempts haven't stopped Human Resource Development Minister [Smriti Irani](#) from forwarding paperwork to President Pranab Mukherjee's office questioning Dinesh Singh's conduct as vicechancellor regarding three key allegations against him. The President is the so-called 'visitor' of all central universities and is therefore the authority that appoints or fires their heads.

Singh's fate has been uncertain ever since the advent of the new government in May, having already become unpopular among faculty and students for implementing a four-

year undergraduate programme (FYUP). He was forced to roll the programme back in June.

The HRD ministry under Irani also took cognisance of a 'white paper' released by the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) alleging financial and administrative irregularities in the varsity's functioning. It then launched an inquiry into the allegations. Based on this, it has urged President Mukherjee to seek an explanation from Singh on three issues.

The issues on which the HRD ministry has urged President Mukherjee to seek an explanation from Singh are:

1. Did Singh have the President's approval for the amended ordinance that enabled FYUP? -- Was Rs 150 crore diverted from grants that were meant for OBC students to purchase about 62,000 laptops?

2. Can Singh justify DU's recent assertion in the [Delhi High Court](#) that "the university falls within the definition of 'state' under Article 12 of the Constitution" and therefore can have its own policy on quotas under Article 16 (A)? This was part of an affidavit pertaining to a petition filed by the SC/ST/OBC Teachers' [Forum](#) against the university for not following the reservation policy in appointing professors.

A senior ministry official gave a clear indication of the ministry's thinking on the matter.

"The fact is that for each of the three allegations the V-C does not have a satisfactory answer to offer. He implemented FYUP without getting the President's nod for the amended ordinance. Funds were, indeed, diverted from the OBC grants.

The university administration has already been rapped for the appalling affidavit," this person said. Singh did not respond to any of ET's phone calls or messages. [DU](#) spokesperson Malay Neerav was on leave and unavailable for comment. The teachers' union is implacable in its view of Singh's management of affairs. "There is a complete breakdown in DU in terms of administration and governance," said Nandita Narain, president of DUTA. "The most outstanding administrative irregularity is the implementation of FYUP. The evidence is all there. We were expecting the ministry to take some quick action but nothing has happened yet."

Irani's tenure at the ministry has been marked by controversy, including queries over her educational qualifications, the scrapping of German in Kendriya Vidyalaya schools mid-term, consultations with the Sangh Parivar over education policy, the resignation of National Council for Education Research & Training director Parvin Sinclair and lately the resignation of IIT-Delhi director RK Shevgaonkar two years before his term was to end. There have been conflicting claims regarding the departure of Shevgaonkar, with some saying he was forced out over irregularities regarding the establishment of an offshore campus and others saying he was victimised.

## ELECTIONS

HINDU, DEC 26, 2014

### **Understanding the Kashmir mandate**

WAJAHAT HABIBULLAH

As reports came in of the high turnout in the Kashmir Valley in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, my mind went back to a bleaker time, in 1993, when I was Commissioner in Kashmir under Governor's rule. It was a State that convulsed with the spasms of uncontrolled violence and pervasive fear. It was also a time when I discussed with Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, the crying need for a return to democracy, which, despite the advice of much of the establishment of the time, was my firm view of being the only way of ending the inchoate impasse. So, I could not but feel pride, along with I am sure every Indian, in what I see as the fructification of a dream of many years — that regular elections be held, so that the people, with their blighted past of flawed elections, see to it that theirs is a voice, like that of any Indian, that will be heard.

The 2002 elections that voted out the National Conference (NC) government was a watershed event in that Kashmiris — perhaps with the exception of the 1977 elections, and which I conducted as the Deputy Commissioner of then Srinagar district — actually saw for the first time that they could vote out their “rulers”. Up to that time, the elections in Jammu and Kashmir had been little more than a charade. The increasingly obvious fairness of the polls since 2002 has placed the present in sharp contrast to that unhappy past. I recall a discussion with Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh in 2002, on how to ensure that the elections were free and fair, and would appear so, not only to the world, but, more importantly, to the people of the State as well. The present election has been special because it represents a fruition of India's quest to guarantee freedom to all sections of its people, and the high participation of the Kashmiris represents a triumph for India's democracy.

### **End of separatism?**

In the present election we have had the regional parties, the NC and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) exchange the lead vote share of 32.2 per cent between 2008 and 2014. While the PDP had taken 24.1 per cent in 2008, the NC has come down to 17.2 per cent in 2014. Independents and others, including the regional Panthers Party, had taken 11.5 per cent in 2008, but have been reduced to a negligible percentage. What is significant however is that the national parties, the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which between them had shared a total of 32.1 per cent of the vote in 2008, have together taken nearly 46 per cent of the vote in the current election.

Does this election then mark the end of separatism? Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had been criticised by many for declaring in his Independence Day speech in 2009 that in Kashmir, separatism as an issue was over. Having been associated with the internal dialogue process with the separatists initiated by the Vajpayee government, I am witness to the fact that by 2009, the pervasive political demand was indeed only for greater self-

government within the Indian Union. It is important to understand that the theme tune of Kashmir's union with India springs from the aspiration for *azadi*. What is *azadi* to a Kashmiri? While there is no agreement on the meaning of this term to a Kashmiri, Sajjad Lone, author of "Achievable Nationhood: A Vision Document on Resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir Conflict" (Srinagar: Jammu & Kashmir People's Conference, 2006), a former separatist leader and son of one of the Hurriyat's founding members Abdul Ghani Lone, has, by participating in elections for a second time, given us the answer.

This he did with his party, the J&K People's Conference (JPC) taking two seats, Handwara and Kupwara, and where his Pakistani wife Asma, the daughter of Amanullah Khan of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), campaigned freely for him. Although there had been calls for a boycott by some sections of the 'separatists', this was muted and later blunted by the very voices that had called for it.

What then is the challenge for the new government?

### **Polarisation**

Communal polarisation in the State has been a matter of concern since the Amarnath land controversy of 2008 that had felled the INC-led coalition bringing on the 2008 election. This was only exacerbated by the 2010 disturbance that followed an encounter, now established in a court martial to have been staged by some soldiers in the frontier township of Macchil. The election results serve to deepen such concern. There is not a single Hindu candidate who has won from Kashmir, with Moti Kaul of the BJP contesting in Habbakadal of Srinagar being the only runner-up. Although the party leading in the Kashmir Valley, the PDP, had fielded candidates in Jammu Division, the only seats that it has won are in Muslim-dominated constituencies in Jammu Division: Darhal, Rajouri and Poonch. Of the three winning contenders in the Valley, the PDP, the JKNC and the INC, it is only the JKNC which has won seats in Hindu-dominated areas in Jammu Division.

On the other hand, the BJP, the second largest party in the Assembly, has fielded and won with both Hindu and Muslim candidates in Jammu — including in the hitherto Congress fastness in the Muslim-dominated Chenab valley — but has taken not a single seat in Kashmir or in Ladakh, a constituency that it holds in the Lok Sabha. Besides this, the BJP's share in the Kashmir Valley, set against the 28.7 per cent of the vote taken by it Statewide, is only one per cent. And this is despite a determined effort by the BJP's national leadership to reach out. In an article in the *Times of India* (December 22), Sameer Arshad Khatlani says that this only contributed to a reaction seen in the larger voter turnout. The increase in the BJP presence is indeed the foremost feature of these elections, rising from a mere 12.6 per cent of the vote share to the present, edging the INC into fourth place. But this stems almost entirely from its dramatic gains in only the Jammu Division. This issue will therefore pose the prime challenge to the incoming government in J&K and is possibly an issue flagged in the process of what Mehbooba Mufti describes as cobbling together a coalition.

## Issue of AFSPA

The continuing application of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act to the State in the rapidly changing situation has attracted much debate, often heated. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's announcement on withdrawal of the application of the law in certain areas — which the Army has stoutly argued in favour of continuance of the status quo — has deepened Kashmiri suspicions of the country's intent. But there is an alternative. The deployment of the Army, extensively in civilian areas in Kashmir, is a hangover frozen along the demands of the tribal invasion of 1947-48. This explains why there is heavy deployment in Pattan, on the crossroads between Baramulla and Sopore, in Palhalan, located on the *karewa* (highland), a natural wall of defence for Srinagar, and Shalteng, once on Srinagar's outskirts and today a suburb. Clearly, the premier threat today of war between two nuclear-armed States is no longer about a military assault; it is infiltration. For this purpose the Army would do well to consider redeployment along the more vulnerable areas on the Line of Control (LoC). Tensions between the Army and local civilian populations, which characterise the civilian areas of the Valley, despite prodigious efforts by military authorities to dispel such an image through *sadbhavana*, is inexistent along the LoC, where among the predominantly Gujjar tribesmen using these meadows as seasonal pasture, the need for deployment is understood as necessary for their protection. And it must be acknowledged that it is the Army's signal achievement that a military presence in the Valley's heartland is no longer required for maintenance of law and order.

The breakdown of 2010 that afflicted Kashmir, spreading from north to south and into Poonch district in Jammu Division, leading to the extensive loss of lives, mostly children shot by police and paramilitary personnel, demonstrated an absence of representative authority. The Army, at the time, had wisely refused to intervene beyond staging a flag march, to quell what was civil disorder. Unfortunately, preoccupation with security had taken the form of a persistent security presence, two years after the country had celebrated a record high voter turnout.

The State, and the Valley in particular, need to be carried into enjoying the kind of open government, with concomitant official accountability, which the rest of India takes for granted. What, then, is the demand on the Indian Union? The answer is incredibly simple: allow to the Kashmiris the same liberty that is considered a right by each Indian. Kashmir then calls for India to introspect. The infrastructure is already in place. Will the result of this election help India rise to the challenge?

I can only conclude with the words of the great 14th century Saivite mendicant and poetess of Kashmir, mentor of the Sufi Sheikh Nooruddin of Charar-e-Sharief, revered by Hindus as Lalla Ded and Muslims as Lalla Arifa, and also with a fervent hope: A thousand times I asked my guru, 'The name of the One who is known by No-thing', Tired and exhausted was I, asking time and again; Out of Nothing emerged; Something, bewildering and great! — Lalla Ded

(Wajahat Habibullah is former chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities.)

The State, and the Valley in particular, need to be carried into enjoying the kind of open government, with concomitant official accountability, which the rest of India takes for granted.

The present election is special because it represents a fruition of India's quest to guarantee freedom to all sections of its people. The high participation of the Kashmiris represents a triumph for India's democracy

## EMINENT PERSONALITIES

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 31, 2014

### **B R Ambedkar's researches, economic theories neglected: RSS**

Ambedkar's theories & thesis are not given much prominence & it is "unfortunate" that research is not done over them by universities in the country, said RSS

NEW DELHI: [RSS](#) today rued that despite being a prominent economist, B R Ambedkar's theories and thesis are not given much prominence and it is "unfortunate" that research is not done over them by universities in the country.

Terming Ambedkar as a "great" labour leader, RSS Joint Secretary [Krishna Gopal](#) said that many of the rules in various labour laws apart from the concept of tripartite talks were brought by him which are prevalent even today.

"He was a prominent economist but it is unfortunate that none of the universities in the country do any good research on him...not even on his economic theories," Gopal said while delivering sixth memorial lecture on "Dr Ambedkar: Multidimensional Personality and Narrative at Indian Institute of Public Administration."

Gopal claimed that despite graduating in economics from prestigious Columbia University and London School of Economics and releasing important papers on 'Small holdings in India and their remedies', Ambedkar's researches and papers were not even properly published.

"Small holdings in India and their remedies was a big paper of Ambedkar...how agriculture land is getting smaller. [Economic Development](#) of this country is not possible through small holdings...He said this 100 years ago. He urged for industrialisation at the earliest as there is much pressure on agriculture.

"Even after 100 years, the research on his theories and thesis that should have happened, its possibility, it seems is bleak," he said.

Noting that Ambedkar had three 'gurus' in his life - Buddha, Kabir and Mahatma Phule, Gopal said that without understanding the three of them, understanding Ambedkar would be incomplete.

The RSS leader said that the Communists had labelled him as "enemy of labourers" but Ambedkar had spoken very strongly about them and had said during one of the speeches that they were a "misguided body of men".

"Now the communist put a picture of Ambedkar and say that he was leading light of class struggle, how can we believe this? He was labour minister before Independence for five years. The big labour unions today...they too know little about this," Gopal said.

## FINANCE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, DEC 24, 2014

### **India slashes health budget by almost 20%**

The government has ordered a cut of nearly 20% in its 2014-15 healthcare budget due to fiscal strains, putting at risk key disease control initiatives in a country whose public spending on health is already among the lowest in the world.

Two health ministry officials told Reuters on Tuesday that more than 60 billion rupees, or \$948 million, has been slashed from their budget allocation of around \$5 billion for the financial year ending on March 31.

Despite rapid economic growth over the past two decades, successive governments have kept a tight rein on healthcare expenditure. India spends about 1% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on public health, compared to 3% in China and 8.3% in the United States.

But hopes were high that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was elected in May, would upgrade basic health infrastructure and make medical services more affordable for the poor.

The United Nations estimates about one third of the world's 1.2 billion poorest people live in India.

"We were not expecting (budget cuts) this time because of the commitments they made in the manifesto," one of the health ministry officials said, referring to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "No reason was given ... but there is shortage of funds. It is not rocket science."

The officials requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The finance ministry, which ordered the spending reduction and overruled objections from the health ministry at a recent meeting, did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

The move reflects the government's struggle to achieve its 2014/15 fiscal deficit target of 4.1% of GDP.

Dominated by private players, India's healthcare industry is growing at an annual clip of around 15%, but public spending has remained low and resulted in a dilapidated network of government hospitals and clinics, especially in rural areas.

One of the health ministry officials said the cut could crimp efforts to control the spread of diseases. More newborns die in India than in poorer neighbours such as Bangladesh, and preventable illnesses such as diarrhoea kill more than a million children every year.

The retrenchment could also derail an ambitious universal healthcare programme that Modi wants to launch in April. The plan aims to provide all citizens with free drugs and diagnostic treatments, as well as insurance benefits.

The cost of that programme over the next four years had been estimated at 1.6 trillion rupees (\$25 billion). The health ministry officials had been expecting a jump in their budget for the coming year, in part to pay for this extra cost.

"Even next year we don't think we'll get a huge amount of money," said one official, adding that it was now unclear how the new programme would be funded.

### **HIV/AIDS funds slashed**

In addition to the healthcare budget, the finance ministry has also ordered a spending cut for India's HIV/AIDS programme by about 30% to 13 billion rupees (\$205.4 million).

India had the third-largest number of people living with HIV in the world at the end of 2013, according to the UN AIDS programme, and it accounts for more than half of all AIDS-related deaths in the Asia-Pacific.

In October, India was on the brink of running out of a critical medicine in its free HIV/AIDS drugs programme due to bureaucratic delays. A crisis was averted with the assistance of pharmaceutical companies and global health organisations.

Still, health activists complain about dire shortages of several HIV/AIDS diagnostic kits.

"We are all in shock. That shows the kind of importance the government attaches to public health," said Leena Menghaney, a New Delhi-based public health activist. "This will undermine the HIV programme in the long run."

## HEALTH SERVICES

HINDU, DEC 30, 2014

### **A year of man-made health crises**

CHAPAL MEHRA

Governments that promise development, growth and human well-being must recognise that these are not possible without investments in health and health systems

ILL-EQUIPPED:“Ebola has been endemic to the West Africa region for almost two decades. Yet, the ability of this region to address this disease, or any other, remains severely limited.” Picture shows Nowa Paye, 9, as she is taken to an ambulance after showing signs of Ebola infection in the village of Freeman Reserve, about 30 miles north of Monrovia, Liberia.—

Over the past year, several significant public health crises have unfolded in India and globally. As this year hurtles to an end, it becomes important to examine these events, if only momentarily, to understand the lessons they hold.

On closer examination, it becomes apparent that many of these crises were man-made — either because of continued neglect, a lack of focus on prevention and insufficient investment in health, or a focus on addressing diseases but not their root causes, i.e., the social determinants of health.

Early in the year, the war in Gaza and the blockade exacerbated a health crisis caused by continued international neglect of the people of Gaza. At the last count, the four-week conflict left 10,000 homes annihilated and displaced 4,50,000 people. The real public health crisis was the lack of electricity, clean drinking water and safe homes. Overcrowding and the lack of water and sanitation facilities led to a rise in the incidence of water-related diseases. As time passes, this destruction will expectedly result in multiple health crises that will affect the physical and mental well-being of hundreds of thousands of people.

Yet nothing made more news than the Ebola crisis in West Africa, where over 7,000 people have died. In the poorest and perhaps most politically unstable part of the continent where this crisis unfolded, the biggest areas of neglect were health systems, infrastructure, funding, trained human resources and little community education. Ebola has been endemic to the West Africa region for almost two decades. Yet, the ability of this region to address this disease, or any other, remains severely limited. Ebola wasn't a global priority either, because it was centred in a poor region. International agencies bickered and took their time to respond while people died. When the first case emerged in the U.S., Ebola finally qualified as an important disease, and new experimental drugs, vaccines and preparedness soon followed. As always, it seemed too little, too late.

### **Health care in India**

Let's turn homeward. As India marched towards *acche din*, it also marched towards global leadership in many diseases. This year witnessed repetitive crises in malaria and dengue. Diabetes and heart disease continued to confound us. Earlier this year, we had a shocking stock-out of HIV testing kits and later of HIV drugs that, ironically, we produce and supply globally. Even as thousands were deprived of drugs in the public health sector, the government defended itself saying the situation was not "too bad." India's drug-resistant TB crisis too came out of the closet with over a 1,00,000 cases. We also finally admitted on national television that TB is the country's time bomb.

However, the highlight was the sterilisation tragedy in Chhattisgarh. Over 10 of the 83 women who underwent sterilisation surgeries in the State died, while many others were hospitalised in a critical condition. The incident revealed the patriarchal mindset of successive governments who focus on female surgical sterilisation as a cornerstone of family planning. It also revealed the ongoing nexus between government officials and petty manufacturers, as the antibiotics given to patients were suspected of containing rat poison. Unfortunately, no politician or government official has been tried for culpable homicide. These deaths remain unpunished.

On a broader level, the quality of health services in urban and rural India, in both the public and private sectors, continued to be abysmal, as millions of patients travelled to access health services elsewhere. Over 60 per cent of all Indians continued to access healthcare in the private sector (many from quacks) at exorbitant costs and were often exploited with inappropriate tests and treatment. India's epidemic of micro bacterial resistance also continued unabated as pharmacies sold antibiotics over the counter without sufficient control from the government. The biggest blow came at the end of the year as news leaked that the new government would cut health spending by around 20 per cent. For a country whose spending on health is among the lowest in the world, this was a terrible way to wrap up the year.

### **Lessons for the next year**

What can we learn for 2015? Governments in India and elsewhere that promise development, growth and human well-being must recognise this: all this is not possible without investments in health and health systems. We need to invest in improving preventive and primary health care, sanitation, waste management and health education. Finally, if our long history of continuing disease and recent crises teach us anything, it is that the fundamentals of health remain critically important in disease control — sufficient nutrition, safe habitation, better air quality, sanitation, health-seeking behaviours, safety, and reduced conflict. All of these are deeply linked, not just to health but social and economic policy. Reducing spending on health will make things worse, not better, in India and elsewhere. *Acche din* will not arrive either next year or the decade after unless India integrates these lessons with its public policy.

(Chapal Mehra is an independent New Delhi-based writer.)

Many of this year's crises were either because of continued neglect, a lack of focus on prevention and insufficient investment in health, or a focus on addressing diseases but not their root causes

## HOUSING

BUSINESS LINE, DEC 31, 2014

### **Delhi building byelaws simplified; single window clearance planned**

For residents in the Capital, sanctions to be easier in the New Year

A day after announcing regularisation of around 2,000 unauthorised colonies in Delhi, the Government on Tuesday simplified building byelaws for the Capital's residents, making sanctions for building plans easier.

The Delhi Building Bye Laws of 1983 have been made "user-friendly; simplified, rationalised and updated," the Ministry of Urban Development said in a release.

Incidentally, the move comes ahead of the Assembly elections in Delhi, expected to be held in February, and will be a big relief to lakhs of residents hoping to build or make additions to their buildings.

#### **New rules**

While plots up to 100 sq m will now be exempt from the sanction process, there will be single window clearance for plots above 20,000 sq m. The applications for these will be scrutinised by a high-powered committee, a statement from the Ministry said. For plots of 100 sq m to 20,000 sq m, specific time schedules have been stipulated for giving approvals by various agencies. The Delhi Urban Arts Commission in association with the Delhi Development Authority and municipal bodies has completed the simplification exercise and submitted the draft of the byelaws to the Ministry.

To address the challenges such as green construction and water conservation and management, some new provisions have also been made. Setting up of grievance redress committees in urban local bodies has been made mandatory. Green construction norms based on plot size have been announced. Competency criteria of engineers, architects, town planners etc., have been stipulated. While constructing near heritage building/monuments, the norms to be followed with respect to agencies such as Heritage Conservation Committee, Archaeological Survey of India, National Monument Authority have been listed, the statement said.

Provisions for disaster mitigation, structural and fire safety codes have been specified and time-frames have been fixed for issuing development control regulations to applicants and professionals, among other measures.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TELEGRAPH, DEC 31, 2014

### **All is not well**

- New Delhi must counter the worsening image of India in the US **DIPLOMACY: K.P. Nayar**

With slightly more than three weeks to go before Barack Obama arrives in New Delhi, India's public diplomacy in the United States of America has been thrown at the deep end of the Potomac, the river that is a symbol of America's capital.

Instead of a celebration of the first ever visit by a US president to be chief guest at the Republic Day parade, Washington and New York are witnessing a difficult struggle by well-meaning friends of India and Indian diplomats to fight the perception that Obama will soon be bestowing approval on a country where intolerance has become its new benchmark of tolerance.

Their struggle may not be an uphill task as long as this perception remains confined to big cities like Washington or New York, even if such cities have the capacity to chart the course of relations between India and the US. However, an inevitable shadow will be cast on Obama's visit - and more consequentially, on its follow up - if such a perception takes root in America's heartland.

Images of a fire at the Roman Catholic Saint Sebastian's Church in New Delhi or accounts from Asroi in Uttar Pradesh of a torn cross on a church wall with an idol of Lord Shiva in its place can make or mar attitudes towards India's new government in America's south, which is deeply Christian. After all, human rights lobbies alone could not have kept Narendra Modi out of the US for almost a decade by refusing him a visa. The Christian lobbies in America made that possible.

Round-the-clock television is capable of producing an exaggerated impact on viewers of situations which, in the old days, would not have merited more than a paragraph or two in the print medium. But now, that has changed: newspapers, more so, the ailing magazine industry in the US, are competing against 24-hour television to survive. This writer has experienced it first hand in Syria, where TV coverage had no accountability to the truth in the early months of the Arab Spring there. Until such coverage acquired the perception of truth and set the agenda for serious efforts to overthrow the legitimate government in Damascus by force.

A rare assertion in the name of the entire editorial board of *The New York Times* on Christmas day that "hope is in danger of crumbling" in Narendra Modi's India may yet belong to that type of exaggerated breast-beating. It may equally be true when *The Washington Post* reported in detail about Christmas carolers having been beaten up in Hyderabad - which creates instant sympathy for a minority.

The danger is that in recent weeks, it has become axiomatic in the mainstream US media that India's Christians, who suffer an average of 150 attacks a year, are at further risk of persecution with a change of government in New Delhi. In the last half of its second term, the perception spread in America that the United Progressive Alliance government under Manmohan Singh had become dysfunctional and, as a result, India ceased to be an attractive destination for US investors.

When the editorial board of *The New York Times* assumes ownership for an assertion that "emboldened Hindu militants" could "turn further progress on economic reform into a sideshow, with the politics and divisiveness occupying center stage" it is bound to have some influence on informed thinking in Wall Street.

This is not to suggest in any way that all is lost. On the contrary, when Obama arrives in New Delhi in about three weeks, he will come with an open mind. More than any other US politician in recent times, Obama has been at the receiving end of disinformation, stereotyping and media campaigns based on half truths and untruths. There is no danger that his decisions will be guided by perceptions based on media accounts.

But the worry is that Indo-US initiatives coming out of the presidential visit may be merely transactional if intolerance becomes the standard for tolerance in a new India that Modi is trying to build. After India and the US buried their Cold War past, attempts were indeed made to go beyond what is merely transactional in their bilateral relations. But neither side has succeeded in getting out of such a rut. If India fails in its current public diplomacy challenge, the danger is that Modi's and Obama's vision of raising the bar of Indo-US relations may fail once again.

Journalism in America has a herd mentality, an affliction that is taking root in the Indian media as well. So it was not surprising that along with *The New York Times*, similar views were owned up immediately by *Bloomberg*. "In the firestorm that has erupted around the conversion issue, one man's refusal to comment has come to seem as meaningful as any argument: Prime Minister Modi, who in recent months has taken his message of development and an economically resurgent India to many parts of the world, has remained shamefully silent."

More than 20 years ago, it was reformers in the P.V. Narasimha Rao government, who skillfully - and with some help from lobbyists specializing in spin - used such herd mentality to their advantage. Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh did the same, the latter with immense success in his first term. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, a best-seller by Thomas Friedman, a columnist of *The New York Times*, bears the imprint of such well-planned Indian media management in the US.

New Delhi, ironically, is now getting it back in the same coin. In his reflective moments, it must be galling for Modi that the popular tide in the US has loudly turned against India's efforts at social engineering and may put on the back burner the enthusiasm which the prime minister generated in America as recently as in September.

When difficulties in bilateral relations rear their heads, conventional wisdom at the Indian embassy in Washington and at the Americas division in the ministry of external affairs has been to turn to Capitol Hill. Traditionally, India has enjoyed greater support in the US Congress than with the executive. Modi is fortunate that he has two Indian diplomats at the Mission in Washington who know how to work the American system.

One of them steered the nuclear deal even after he left his charge of the Americas in South Block and was repeatedly called back from his next assignment in Singapore to New Delhi to deal with the tortuous course of the 2005 deal between Prime Minister Singh and US President George W. Bush. The other senior diplomat now back in Washington was the midwife of the India Caucus on Capitol Hill in the 1990s. Many of those he rubbed shoulders with in those years are now key decision-makers at very high levels in the US.

But they need help from New Delhi if the rapidly deteriorating image of India in the US is to be salvaged. A big challenge that this poses is that public diplomacy by the Modi government - in which the media have sadly been complicit - has so far only meant convincing the Indian people of India's greatness and its destiny. Instead, the effort should be to convince other countries, their governments and their people that this is, indeed, the case.

A rash of unfavourable stories and editorials across the board in the American media during Christmas week is proof that India has come up short on this score even as a successful effort is being mounted domestically that all is well on the foreign affairs front.

## LABOUR

BUSINESS LINE, DEC 26, 2014

### **Parliamentary panel suggests labour courts within factory premises**

Objects to raising threshold limit for factories

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, looking into the changes proposed in the Factories Amendment Bill, 2014, has suggested that labour courts be set up within the factory complex for on-the-spot disposal of complaints/grievances.

“The management should be made legally bound to protect and uplift the interest of the workers,” it said in its report tabled in Parliament recently, while urging the Government to ensure that the proposed legislation be “very carefully calibrated” so as to guarantee security, safety, health and welfare of the workers and labourers as well as to facilitate their growth and employability.

The committee, headed by BJP leader Virendra Kumar, suggested that all factory workers be controlled by the Labour Commissioner concerned, and called for periodical audit by an independent agency to certify compliance to the rules and regulations made under the Factories Act so as to make it foolproof.

The committee said it did not accept the amendment to raise the threshold limit of employment (for falling under the purview of the Factories Act) from 10 to 20 workers (in case of factories using power) and from 20 to 40 workers (in case of factories not using power). It said it was not convinced with the Labour Ministry’s reasoning (that some States had demanded flexibility), as State Governments are empowered under the Concurrent List to propose their own amendments to the Factories Act from time to time depending on their requirement.

“Needless to say, such a Central Legislation enhancing the threshold level to empower the States is not required,” it said.

Trade unions, associations and individuals had expressed concern that if the amendment is carried out over 70 per cent of the factory establishments will be out of the coverage of the Act, “leaving workers at the mercy of employers on every aspect of their service conditions, rights and protective provisions...”

### **Working hours**

As regards the amendment to increase the spread of working hours from the existing 10.5 hours to 12 hours, the committee urged the Labour Ministry to revisit the matter, as it feared that it may lead to the harassment of the workers on being compelled to stay in the workplace for a longer period without adequate compensation.

The Bill, one of the key labour reforms being pushed by the Narendra Modi Government, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 7 this year. It was referred to the committee

by the Speaker for examination and report within three months after several MPs sought clarifications. The Committee later got time extension to present the report to the House by December 23.

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The Bill, one of the key labour reforms being pushed by the Narendra Modi Government, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 7.

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(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 26, 2014)

## **LIBRARIES**

HINDU, DEC 24, 2014

### **EMS Cooperative Library bags award**

EMS Cooperative Library, Kakkanad, promoted by the Ernakulam District Cooperative Bank, has been selected for the award for the best library in the cooperative sector.

A statement issued by the library here on Tuesday said this was the first time that such an award was being given away.

The award was presented to the District Cooperative Bank directors P.P. Joy and Benny Paul and the bank's general manager M.K. Radhakrishnan by former Minister for Cooperation G. Sudhakaran at a function in Thrissur. The library was opened in October 1999 with a view to inculcating the habit of reading among the young people and it was the first such venture under the cooperative sector, said the press statement.

The library is spread over 13,500 sq.ft. area in three storeys. The library is home to 86,000 books and it has a total of 11,400 members.

One of the key features of the library is a garden and walkway filled with trees and plants attached to the library and the library was launched as a place for reading in the garden.

## MONEY

BUSINESS LINE, DEC 26, 2014

### **After 20 years, Rs. 1 paper notes to make a comeback**

SHISHIR SINHA

Reports of coin shortage may have prompted the move

One rupee may not buy you much today, yet the Government is keen to start printing Rs. 1 notes after a gap of almost two decades.

The Government has notified 'Printing of One Rupee Currency Notes Rules, 2015', which will come into effect from January 1, 2015. Due to higher cost and for freeing capacity to print higher denomination notes, printing Rs. 1 note was discontinued in November 1994, followed by Rs. 2 in February 1995, and Rs. 5 in November 1995. Since then, only coins have been issued for these denominations. However, old notes are still in circulation and remain legal tender.

As before, the new one rupee note will have the signature of the Finance Secretary. Apart from the one rupee note, all other paper currency (Rs. 2, Rs. 5, Rs. 10, Rs. 20, Rs. 50, Rs. 100, Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000) have the signature of the RBI Governor, as these are issued by the Reserve Bank of India, whereas Rs. 1 is issued by the Government of India.

The new Rs. 1 note will be different in terms of colour, too. It will be predominantly pink and green. Earlier, the Rs. 1 currency note had a predominantly indigo colour. Also, the new note will have 'Bharat Sarkar' on its masthead, with 'Government of India' printed below that. All other currencies have 'Bhartiya Reserve Bank' and 'Reserve Bank of India' printed on them. While the notification does not give any reason for resuming the printing of Rs. 1 notes, it is believed that reports of coin shortage and the rising incidence of melting coins might have prompted the move. The notification does not mention how many notes will be printed and issued.

In the last year of its printing, 44 million pieces of Rs. 1 notes were issued. Despite the RBI's appeal to change these notes for coins, these are still in circulation. However, there is no current estimate of such notes in circulation.

According to the last official number in RBI's Annual Report for the year ended June 2002, a total of 3,076 million pieces of Rs. 1 notes (value Rs. 308 crore) were in circulation at the end of March 2002.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated December 26, 2014)

## **POLICE**

HINDU, DEC 31, 2014

### **160 North-east cops to join Delhi Police annually**

To equip the force to deal better with crimes against North-eastern residents of the Capital, the Delhi Police will now induct 160 personnel from the region annually.

Backing the initiative taken by Delhi Police Commissioner B.S. Bassi, who has already written letters to the heads of police forces in these States, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju said on Tuesday that he has urged the Chief Ministers to expedite the process.

“Ten male and 10 female personnel will be inducted in the Delhi Police every year from the seven States and Sikkim every year,” he said.

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

HINDU, DEC 30, 2014

### **Disability department gets a new name**

The Department of Disability Affairs ( *Nishaktata Karya Vibhag* ) functioning under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been renamed as the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities ( *Viklangjan Sashaktikaran Vibhag* ).

The gazette notification in this regard has been issued by the Government, said a statement here on Monday.

It was carved out as separate department and christened the Department of Disability Affairs in 2012 to act as the nodal agency for matters pertaining to disabilities.

This apart, seven national institutes including institutes for the differently-abled, visually challenged, mentally challenged, and empowerment of persons with multiple disabilities are functioning under this Department. – PTI

Rechristened as Dept. of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

TRIBUNE, DEC 29, 2014

### **Raghubar Das sworn in as J'khand CM**

Raghubar Das takes oath as the 10th Jharkhand Chief Minister in Ranchi on Sunday. PTI

Veteran BJP leader Raghubar Das today took oath as Jharkhand's 10th Chief Minister, the first non-tribal to do so.

The 60-year-old Das, who will head a two-party coalition, made it to the venue to wild cheering by thousands of supporters after offering prayers at a Hanuman temple and a Shani temple.

But the crowds thronging the Morabadi football ground here were disappointed as Prime Minister Narendra Modi failed to make it to the event as he couldn't take off from New Delhi due to bad weather. A thick fog in northern India also prevented BJP president Amit Shah, party veteran LK Advani and Home Minister Rajnath Singh from making it to Ranchi.

Governor Syed Ahmad administered the oath of office and secrecy to Das and four ministers — three from the BJP and one from the All-Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU).

BJP ministers are Neelkanth Singh Munda, CP Singh and Louis Marandi, who defeated outgoing Chief Minister Hemant Soren in the Dumka Assembly constituency. The AJSU representative in the ministry is Chandra Prakash Chaudhary. This is first time a non-tribal will lead the government in Jharkhand. All previous nine Chief Ministers were tribals.

A five-time legislator, Das was elected the BJP legislature party leader on Friday after the BJP won 37 seats in the 81-member Assembly. The AJSU got five seats to give the two parties a majority in the House.

Das joined the BJP in 1980, the year it was formed following the break-up of the Janata Party. He has been the Jharkhand BJP president twice. Das, a law graduate, belongs to a large family and has three brothers and three sisters. He married Rukmani Devi and has a son and a daughter.

He was elected a legislator for the first time in 1995 from Jamshedpur east to the then Bihar state assembly. When Jharkhand was carved out from Bihar in 2000, he became labour minister in Babulal Marandi's government. He was a minister in Arjun Munda's government too. After the 2009 Assembly polls, Das became the deputy Chief Minister in the Shibu Soren government. — IANS

## POSTAL SERVICES

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 31, 2014

### **Now, post offices can provide ATM cards, account statements**

Post offices moved a step closer to becoming banks. The government has allowed certain eligible branches to issue ATM cards to their account holders.

NEW DELHI: [Post offices](#) moved a step closer to becoming banks. The government has allowed certain eligible branches to issue [ATM cards](#) to their account holders and also account statements instead of giving out passbooks, as most private sector banks do.

On Tuesday, the government issued a gazette notification amending the [Post Office Savings Bank General Rules](#), 1981. The rules will come into force immediately. These facilities will be available to the branches that are working on core banking solution software, essentially branches that part of an electronic network.

Post offices currently provide savings account, recurring deposits, fixed deposits and many other small savings schemes run by the government including the popular Public Provident Funds.

The funds raised by them largely go to finance central and state governments. India post currently has about 1.55 lakh branches, nearly 90% are in the rural areas, which many experts see as a good vehicle for financial inclusion. The notification says the post office savings bank could issue automated teller machine or debit card to account holders on request or otherwise which can be used to withdraw funds from any of the branches having core banking.

The deposits to these accounts could be made and accepted through any electronic mode. The RBI had decided against issuing a banking licence to India Post when it gave out licence to [IDFC](#) and [Bandhan Financial Services](#) saying it would decide after consultation with government. The new rules notified by the government will push India Post closer to banks.

## PRIME MINISTERS

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 24, 2014

### **Japan parliament re-elects Shinzo Abe as prime minister**

Abe won 328 votes out of the 470 cast by lawmakers in a special session of the lower house. He was due to name his cabinet members later in the day.

TOKYO: Japan's parliament re-elected [Shinzo Abe](#) on Wednesday to serve another term as [prime minister](#) after his party won a snap election earlier this month.

Abe won 328 votes out of the 470 cast by lawmakers in a special session of the lower house Wednesday. Since the ruling [Liberal Democrats](#) hold only two lower house seats, two other lawmakers also cast votes for Abe.

Following a similar vote by the upper house, Abe will name his cabinet, replacing only his defense minister. The cabinet members are then to be presented in a formal ceremony to Emperor Akihito at the Imperial Palace.

The victory by the ruling Liberal Democrats and their coalition partner the [Komei Party](#) was viewed as an endorsement by the public of Abe's strategies for reviving Japan's stagnant economy, despite a record low turnout.

Former Defense Minister Akinori Eto was among cabinet ministers appointed in a reshuffle in early September. He was one of several ministers whose political funding reports were questioned by opposition lawmakers during the recent parliamentary session. Two resigned their cabinet posts but were re-elected anyway.

The questions over political finance pulled Abe's popularity ratings lower and were likely a factor in his decision to call the snap election.

Analysts said Eto's handling of the questions was seen as too weak, and that Abe planned to appoint a stronger figure to help handle anticipated fierce questioning over defense-related issues in the next year's parliamentary debate.

Local media said Gen Nakatani was viewed as the likely replacement for Eto. Nakatani served as defense minister under former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and supports a stronger role for Japan's military, which is constrained by the country's commitment to pacifism under the constitution drafted by the American occupation forces following Japan's defeat in World War II.

Abe favors revising the constitution as part of his effort to fortify Japan's military.

Despite a record low turnout, the election's outcome was seen as a public endorsement of Abe's policies. But it also raises expectations for him to more aggressively tackle politically tough reforms for reviving the economy, two years after he first took office.

The economy fell into recession last year following a sales tax hike in April to 8 percent from 5 percent, prompting Abe to put off until 2017 a tax hike planned for October 2015.

Meanwhile, the central bank has stepped up its purchases of assets, pumping up to 80 trillion yen (\$663 billion) a year into the economy to help drive prices higher and spur faster growth. A recent decision to shift more public pension money into stock investments is driving share prices higher.

Since Abe must call the next election by December 2018, he could have another four years to deliver on pledges to open markets and streamline regulations that have hindered Japan's competitiveness. So far, Japan's powerful bureaucracy and its rural and commercial sectors have resisted major changes, foiling earlier reform efforts.

But perhaps the biggest challenge is in getting private industry to significantly raise wages while they are still struggling to contain costs to compete with other big export economies. The meager increases in the past two years have not kept pace with inflation, hobbling a recovery in consumer demand needed to put growth on a sustainable path.

Such "structural problems, namely labor shortages and corporations shifting production overseas, have become more evident and offset the policy effects that Prime Minister Abe has pursued since he took office in late 2012," IHS economist Harumi Taguchi said in a recent research note.

"Although the government has pledged to accelerate structural reforms, it will take some time to see the effects contribute to growth," it said.

## **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 26, 2014

### **Finance Ministry launches e-book to improve governance**

The e-book details disinvestment plans, trade facilitation initiatives, Swachh Bharat Kosh (SBK) and direct benefit transfer scheme, among others.

NEW DELHI: Finance Ministry today issued an [e-book](#) containing important decisions and initiatives with a view to improving [governance](#) and bringing government closer to the public.

"MoF ( [Ministry of Finance](#)) hopes this will be useful to the citizens and an important step in bringing the governance closer to the public," the Ministry said while launching the e-book on 'Sushashan Diwas' (Good Governance Day).

The digital book provides easy access to various initiatives, including good governance steps, taken under the ministry and an IT enabled platform.

The government, the ministry said, attaches utmost importance to the need for improving governance and service delivery to the common man.

"One of the important tenets in this direction is the effective use of IT based applications under e-Governance initiatives," it said, adding the e-book is in line with this.

The e-book details disinvestment plans, trade facilitation initiatives, Swachh Bharat Kosh (SBK) and direct benefit transfer scheme, among others.

It also contains steps taken by the ministry for providing tax clarity and dispute resolution and steps taken by the new government to curb menace black money.

STATESMAN, DEC 26, 2014

### **PM vows to deliver open, accountable administration**

On 'Good Governance Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said efforts are being made for "re-engineering" of government processes as part of the promise to provide an "open and accountable administration".

He said his government has worked over the last seven months with the mantra of 'Citizen-First' and it is committed to providing a transparent and accountable administration which works for the welfare of the common citizens.

"An open and accountable administration is what we had promised to deliver and we will do so.... I assure you, my countrymen that we will not let you down," Modi said in a

message on 'Good Governance Day' being celebrated on the 90th birthday of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

“Today is the birthday of our beloved leader, our former PM Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. On this occasion, we reiterate our commitment towards providing transparent, effective and accountable governance to the people of this country. Let us embark on this mission for good governance together,” he said.

The Prime Minister said the government is working on a simpler internal work process manual, which would be delivered through an e-learning module.

“Government process re-engineering is yet another measure that we are pushing for. Ministries and Departments of the Government of India have been instructed to look into their work spheres, their internal processes and work on what and how to simplify and rationalise them,” he said.

“Good Governance is the key to a nation's progress. Our government is committed to providing a transparent and accountable administration which works for the betterment and welfare of the common citizen,” he said.

Describing 'Citizen-First' as the government's “mantra, our motto and our guiding principle”, Modi said, “It has been my dream to bring government closer to our citizens, so that they become active participants in the governance process.”

During the last seven months, the government has been consistently working towards this goal, he said.

Referring to the initiatives like starting web portals mygov.in and interact with PM to reach to the people directly, Modi said the “unprecedented response” which these have evoked, “places a large responsibility upon us, and I assure you, my countrymen that we will not let you down”.

“The effort to usher in an era of Good Governance has just begun, and begun on a very promising note. An open and accountable administration is what we had promised to deliver and we will do so,” the Prime Minister said in his message.

He said his government considers redress of public grievances as a very important component of a responsive administration. “I have instructed all the Ministries to ensure that redress of public grievances receives the highest priority,” he added.

An important step for Good Governance, Modi said, is simplification of procedures and processes in the government so as to make the entire system transparent and faster. In this direction, he listed the steps taken by the government which include the push

towards self-certification in place of affidavits and attestations and doing away with cumbersome and out-dated legislations.

“Already Appropriation Acts have been identified for repeal and more Acts are being reviewed,” he said.

The Prime Minister said he strongly believes that technology can and must bridge the divide between the government and the citizens as technology is an empowering tool for the citizen and an accountability medium for the government.

“My government fully recognises the huge potential of this tool,” he said, adding Digital India aims to transform the country into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

Proposed to be implemented in phases, Digital India is transformational in nature and would ensure that government services are available to citizens electronically, he said, adding it would also bring in greater accountability through mandated delivery of governments services electronically.

TRIBUNE, DEC 26, 2014

### **Govt observes Good Governance Day on Vajpayee’s birthday**

People wait outside the residence of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee to greet him on his 90th birthday in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

#### **What ministries did**

- Birender Singh headed Rural Development Ministry celebrated the day as Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Divas
- Power and Coal Minister Piyush Goyal launched a portal for e-auction of 24 coal mines
- Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar directed officials to evolve a policy for reducing court cases in service matters
- Health Minister JP Nadda made a surprise visit to Safdarjung Hospital and took part in the ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyan’

Central ministers today held events to observe the government’s new initiative — Good Governance Day — on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The move by the Modi government to celebrate Good Governance Day on a holiday received widespread criticism from Opposition parties, who called it a deliberate attempt to undermine the minorities in the country and the Christmas spirit. Many believed it to be a part of a “larger” plan of the BJP-RSS combine.

Though no official work was conducted due to Christmas holiday, several ministries held functions and announced initiatives to mark the day. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said there was no bigger tribute to Vajpayee than celebrating his birthday as Good Governance Day. Before leaving for Varanasi, he also visited the ailing BJP leader at his residence to wish him on his birthday.

The Birender Singh headed Rural Development Ministry celebrated the day as Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Divas. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) is a flagship scheme of the first NDA government headed by Vajpayee.

Seeking more budgetary allocations for the scheme, Birender said his ministry would revisit the specifications, standards and guidelines of the scheme for reducing cost in construction of roads in rural areas. He said by rescheduling the entire fixation of the PMGSY, funds could be saved to build more roads in rural areas. He said 14 per cent administrative expense is too much in the overall budget. The states should bear the burden for maintenance of roads, he said.

Power and Coal Minister Piyush Goyal launched the portal for e-auction of 24 coal mines ([www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/coalblock](http://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/coalblock)) and started the registration process. The process will be as per the KYC norms and will be available on the MSTC website. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar directed officials to evolve a policy for reducing court cases in service matters including pensions. In a message on the day, he said minimisation of litigation was a priority and that issues of cantonments pertaining to land management and civilian interface should also be resolved without delay.

TRIBUNE, DEC 26, 2014

**Govt asks ministries, depts to avoid private email services**

#### **Prefer homegrown email system**

- Homegrown and India-based email communication systems should be preferred for official work as the servers of private email service providers are based out of India

and is prone to "misuse" or "leakage" of classified and proprietary data, says a government circular

At the time of any security breach incident or data loss it becomes very difficult to obtain data from those service providers apart from the possibility of leakage of information as they are controlled by the service providers outside the country, it said

The government has asked all Central, state departments and ministries to stop using private email services for official communication and instead use indigenous services provided by NIC, to prevent "misuse" or "leakage" of classified data.

A recent circular, accessed by the PTI, issued to all government bodies by the CERT-In under the Union Ministry of Communication and Information Technology has stated that homegrown and India-based email communication systems should be preferred for official work as the servers of private email service providers are based out of India and is prone to "misuse" or "leakage" of classified and proprietary data.

"It has been observed that a number of officials in the ministries/departments in the Central and state governments are using the private mail services particularly hosted and operated from outside India for official communications. Such official communications are government and also the public records. It is to mention that data pertaining to such emails and web services is stored by these service providers outside Indian and is fully under their control.

"At the time of any security breach incident or data loss it becomes very difficult to obtain data from those service providers apart from the possibility of leakage of information as they are controlled by the service providers outside the country," the circular-cum-advisory issued last month said.

The agency, while issuing the circular, has invoked Section 4 of the Public Records Act, 1993 (Prohibition against taking public records out of India) and some recent concerns raised by the Delhi High Court to buttress its point.

Keeping in view both the things in mind, the circular said, "All the ministries, departments of central and state governments should either use email services provided by National Informatics Centre (NIC) or they should use their own email and web

services being fully controlled by them and hosted in India for official communication. CERT-In security guidelines/advisories as issues time to time should be followed.” The CERT-In is the nodal agency to combat hacking, phishing and to fortify security-related defences of the Indian Internet domain. — P

TELEGRAPH, DEC 24, 2014

### **Performance over slogans**

- The Modi government's *Hindutva* agenda has to wait **Commentarao: S.L. Rao**

-  
The National Democratic Alliance government has been very good at creating attractive slogans that get it votes. It promised all of us 'good times' almost immediately; it focussed on development for all; it said it would bring back within 100 days all the money held abroad illegally by Indians, and a lot more. The latest is the slogan for foreign investors to "Make in India". One is beginning to wonder whether Narendra Modi and his government are capable of going beyond slogans to realizing them. This government missed its chance when it presented a lacklustre budget by an overloaded finance minister with no background in economics or business. At least P. Chidambaram, also a successful lawyer with a masters in business administration, had business in his genes, given that he is a Chettiar.

Let us not get fooled by the dropping inflation, somewhat improved growth in the gross domestic product and better balance of payments. Saudi Arabia has presented this opportunity by forcing down crude oil prices in order to put much of American shale oil out of business before raising crude prices again. Nothing that this government has done in six months could have given these results.

As I had pointed out in these columns in the early days of the government, Modi would not allow the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to interfere with his development agenda, but he would give it room for its *Hindutva* agenda. In fact, it appears that the RSS has a better plan for implementing its agenda than Modi has for his development agenda. His ministers, few with experience and many undeserving of the important portfolios they have been given, have been of no help. His human resource development minister does not have a clue on how to go about adding to education in quantity and quality. Instead she is playing with school textbooks, curricula, history, sitting on appointments of directors of major institutions, doing little to improve the severe shortage of faculty and so on.

One of Modi's slogans was improvement of education and skill-development so that India could cash in on the demographic dividend. There is no sign of that. There has been no initiative to reform agriculture by moving politics out of fixing support prices, removing government control of markets or by improving agricultural infrastructure and other much-needed measures. Power and coal are caught in the old mindset, given the continuing public ownership of most of these sectors. There is as yet no rationalization of waste and theft of rural development scheme expenditure goes on unabated. While

Modi's strength may lie in foreign policy, there is dearth of it in getting the economy to move ahead. Manufacturing is still stuck at its low levels.

The Reserve Bank of India governor, Raghuram Rajan, gave a counter slogan to Modi's "Make in India" by coining the slogan, "Make for India". Perhaps the government should seriously consider this and combine both slogans so that we make for India, in India. India offers a vast and growing market. It has a workforce that learns skills easily. It can both be a supplier of goods and services, and source of skilled labour to the world when the world needs it. Given the deteriorating economies of Germany, the rest of the European Union, Japan, Brazil, much of Africa, even China and South-east Asia, India is really shining (not because of its governments but because of external events). It may be doing much worse than it was a few years ago, but its situation is better than other countries. Focusing on making for the Indian market is therefore sensible advice.

Developed countries, except the United States of America, are in a bad shape, with low interest rates (already at near zero) giving no more scope for stimulating the economy, with their ageing labour forces and rigid labour markets. The US is much better off and is showing recovery mainly because of the rise in shale oil and gas production. These have displaced expensive imports. The US expects three per cent growth, a sharp decrease in unemployment, revival in consumer confidence and retail purchases. Interest rates, now at around zero, will rise soon. The boom in the production of oil and gas from shale has also led to a collapse in world oil prices, thereby benefiting emerging economies like India that are short on oil supply. Saudi Arabia's efforts to make high-cost shale oil production unviable with low-end prices, thus reducing domestic production in the US and forcing an increase in its imports, will keep crude prices low for some years.

India must seize this opportunity. No further reduction in retail prices must happen. The government must accumulate the difference to government revenues. This will serve two purposes. There will be lot more money for infrastructure development. The consumer will not face as much of a shock when crude prices rise again.

At the same time, India must be cautious in depending on Russian supplies of defence equipment and nuclear plants. Russia has a collapsing rouble, declining growth, rampant inflation and large increases in interest rates. Its economy has not diversified. It continues to be heavily dependent on crude oil and gas exports. The collapse in world crude prices and Western sanctions, on account of Russia's takeover of Crimea, have hurt Russia badly. Russia is unlikely to recover soon. In such a situation, Russia may desist from further external adventures. However, neither global unrest nor Russian collapse is in India's interest. Certainly, it is unsafe to advance large sums to Russia as down payment.

Energy supplies and costs are fundamental to India's development. The law on unlimited liability for nuclear equipment plant suppliers in case of accidents must be modified or the liability should be limited. Other countries such as Japan, the US and South Korea could then supply their nuclear technology and reduce India's dependence on coal. Construction of the new hydro plants in Nepal, agreed recently, must move apace. We

must improve the technology in coal mining so that productivity and production can rise. This will ultimately require the denationalization of Coal India.

Indian organized manufacturing is less than a fourth of the GDP. Its rise will also increase urban jobs in organized manufacturing (presently around six per cent of the total employment). These new jobs will meet the expected surge in migration to urban from rural areas. India's import dependence must decline, especially on imports of defence equipment, silicon chips, coal and solar panels. The RSS paranoia about foreign investment has kept a cap of 49 per cent on foreign direct investment in defence industries and insurance. These must be raised. Investors must feel that they have control. This control might be illusory once the factory is established in India. Indian employees for these factories automatically lead to technology transfer.

Another major rising import is that of coal. Commercial sale of coal on the Energy Exchange, modern technology in mines, tough regulation of coal tariffs, releasing power tariffs from political interference, appointment of truly independent regulators and denationalization of coal could make India use its coal reserves more fully. This would lead to a sharp reduction in coal imports.

The Modi government has run out of time to announce its policy framework and implement it. For this, it must have good ministers. Except for a very few, such as Suresh Prabhu, Manohar Parrikar and perhaps some others like Piyush Goyal, Sushma Swaraj, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Nirmala Sitharaman, it is weak in key portfolios such as home, finance, human resource development, urban and rural development, agriculture, health and a few others. These portfolios are at the core of any development action. The Modi government must not allow any shift in its focus on development. *Hindutva* can wait until there are visible changes in development. So can slogans and rhetoric. We need implementation.

HINDU, DEC 26, 2014

### Modi leads good governance carol

Centre busies itself with launch of programmes and websites



It was Christmas for the rest of the world, but for the Modi government, it was Good Governance Day on Thursday — the regime's tribute to BJP veteran and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 90th birthday.

Schools and universities in the national capital remained closed, but several Union Ministries marked the day with e-governance initiatives, launch of new programmes and websites. Some dedicated existing initiatives to the nation, while others released year-end reviews of their programmes.

The government's decision to celebrate Good Governance Day on Christmas had invited criticism from several quarters, but it went ahead with its programme of events. Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the programmes with a visit to his Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency, launching development activities and participating in the "Clean India" campaign.

On his second visit to Varanasi after becoming Prime Minister, Mr. Modi took part in the Swachh Bharat mission and inaugurated development works in the city.

While commencing expansion of diesel locomotive works, Mr. Modi asked the people to shed inhibitions over foreign and private capital that could be used in improving railway infrastructure.

At Banaras Hindu University, Mr. Modi launched a mission in the name of the university's founder, Madan Mohan Malaviya, who along with Mr. Vajpayee has been chosen for the country's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna.

## **RAILWAYS**

PIONEER, DEC 26, 2014

### **I LOVE RAILWAYS, NO QUESTION OF ITS PRIVATISATION: PM**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi categorically denied all speculation about any attempt to privatise Railways and said that the development of Railways was top priority of his Government.

He also said that he wanted to make the big network of Railways and Post Office as tool of overall growth of the nation. He was addressing a function at Diesel Locomotive Works (DLW) Stadium on Thursday after flagging off a 4,500 Horse Power (HP) locomotive equipped with several additional facilities. Modi also inaugurated the expansion project worth nearly Rs300 crore.

“Right from my childhood, Indian Railways is like my family and I want to make it clear that there are no proposals to privatise the Railways,” he said, terming all speculation simply as rumours and nothing else. It may be mentioned that even in DLW some protests were seen in recent days when the employees raised voice against the possibilities of moves to make this leading production unit of Indian Railways as a corporation.

The PM said that Railways has a biggest infrastructure and manpower and carry maximum passengers daily in the world and exhorted employees to make it a backbone of economy.

HINDU, DEC 29, 2014

### **Revitalising the Railways**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s clarification that there was no question of privatising the Indian Railways may not have been wholly necessary. But, to dispel a rumour campaign that it was being privatised, Mr. Modi used the ‘good governance’ platform from his Varanasi constituency to drive home that message. The fact remains that the government and the Railways badly need private and foreign investment in the system. The kind of resources needed to take up ongoing projects and also launch ambitious ones such as the dedicated rail corridor and bullet train services, cannot be met by public sector funding alone. That is why the Prime Minister has been looking to Japan and China to provide both technological and financial support to some of these projects. Equally important was the reiteration of the plan to set up four Railway universities across the country. These will specifically cater to the needs of the railway system and provide readily employable candidates in various disciplines. The focus of the railway universities could be very specific, be it the electrical, mechanical or signalling fields, to mention a few. It will take some time for the Railways to do the basic homework, identify the locations and courses, and complete the formalities to start these institutions, which could also look at upgrading the skills of existing employees and providing them opportunities to acquire higher qualifications.

Internally, the Railways is constantly trying to raise more funds and increase earnings from both freight and passenger fares. But a rather unpopular move in recent months has been the dynamic pricing of fares and the premium-rate Tatkal tickets. In October, the Railways unveiled premium Tatkal ticketing, under which 50 per cent of the tickets going through the travel-eve Tatkal window was brought into a dynamic pricing package. While 10 per cent of tickets in the ordinary second class come under Tatkal, up to 30 per cent in the sleeper and higher classes are brought under it. Only e-ticketing is allowed, agents cannot book these tickets, and individual identity document numbers have to be provided online and produced during travel. About 80 popular trains were brought under this scheme. What is more, for the holiday season now, the Railways have introduced special premium trains based on the dynamic pricing policy. The chief problem with the premium scheme is that it keeps the ordinary passenger who books tickets at the railway counter, out of the system: those without Internet access cannot utilise this option. Notably, in its first Railway budget, the BJP-led NDA government raised passenger fares by 14.2 per cent across the board. Even last year, without the dynamic fares, the Railways earned about Rs.1,000 crore through the Tatkal scheme.

## RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

HINDU, DEC 24, 2014

### **Debating the conversion conundrum**

In the furore over conversion, there is a need for dialogue where religion must debate belief within a constitutional framework. There must be an assumption that every citizen has two critical texts to follow — his own religious code and the Constitution. There must also be a shedding of ugly stereotypes

Sometimes as I watch TV, I feel a sense of despair. One sees public debates which are not truly public. In fact, one wonders whether they are even representatives. I am referring to the political battles on the television when each party sends a spokesman to pose an official line. What we have is a desiccated choreography of positions without the dance and dynamic of debates. At the end of the rituals, the audience realises that there has been little argument and less conversation. Each man recites his set piece and moves on glibly. I felt this way while watching the debates on conversion. The very word conversion is like a political signal generating animosity and anxiety around each little event. Recently, when the Bajrang Dal grandly announced that it was reconverting a few thousand Christians and Muslims, the nation's intelligentsia went apoplectic seeing a threat to constitutional values. What was interesting to notice is that the word 'conversion' means different things to different people; that the dictionary definition does not quite capture the contextual emotions of the word — meanings one should open up the debate to by looking at the various nuances of the word.

### **[Read: Conversion and freedom of religion](#)**

#### **Strands to conversion**

Conversion is a ritual act where an individual or group affirms a faith different from the one previously held. The discussion is not so much on the ritual change but on the audience response to that change. One can discern six different strands here. There is first the conversion of lower caste Hindus to Islam or Christianity. The economics element was primary; in fact even among Christians, such groups were called Rice Christians. The Bajrang Dal event where Muslims and Christians reconverted to Hinduism is another variation. The Dal calls this act homecoming (Ghar Vapsi). It felt that this act was a return from exile and cultural displacement and considers it an act of historical rectification. The idea of historical rectification usually involves the corrections of texts, especially ideological debates. One saw in such acts, especially around the Stalinist era, that a major personality would be dissolved into a non-person.

The Bajrang Dal felt that by reconverting these individuals, it was restoring justice by reconstituting the original normalcy. The right wing announced that it would reconvert another 4,000 Christians and Muslims on Christmas day. The Dal and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) felt that this was a true vindication of history.

A third type of conversion takes place among Dalit movements. These groups reject caste and enter Hinduism and opt for new Buddhism. As Ambedkar writes, their opposition to the injustice of Hinduism is clear. Here, conversion is first a rejection of Hinduism, and second, an affirmation of a new social identity as a vehicle for social transformation.

There is a fourth kind of conversion where the individual undergoes metanoia, a fundamental change of belief and accepts another religion and its tenets. This is a genuine act of belief. The individual attains a born again feeling as he acquires a new belief. Such a belief can be transformational or it can carry over the old supposition. For example, one realises that even in conversion to Christianity, caste is kept alive. Many groups see conversion to Christianity in genealogical terms and new converts are often reduced to a lower status and even forced to attend a separate church. In fact, Christianity embalms caste.

### **[Read: The Hindu's Sunday Anchor story: Conversion Confusion](#)**

Hinduism, on the other hand, does not allow for conversion. One is born a Hindu and that is that. Hinduism refuses conversion but allows for syncretism. A hybridisation of beliefs, syncretism and conversion are anchored in totally different views. Conversion is exclusive but syncretism allows for combinations. A Hindu will enthusiastically attend the Velankanni festival. Hindus may in fact include Christ as an Ishta Devata. According to the 'People of India' survey conducted by K.S. Singh, there are at least 300 communities which believe in more than one religion.

There is a fifth act of conversion which is more tactical or instrumental. The individual converts to another religion to evade a legal obstacle. Actor Dharmendra converted to Islam so that he could marry Hema Malini. Here, conversion is not an act of commodification but of convenience. Not a change in belief but a mere instrumentality.

### **Through enticement**

It is the sixth variant which is becoming most problematic. Here, conversion becomes a hustle, an act of enticement, a force or an incentive for the possibilities of an Aadhar card. As a cynic puts it today, conversion is just a BPL card away. It is this act of conversion which is problematic and it is this that the RSS is challenging through large-scale acts of reconversion. It has opened a Pandora's box where a conversion becomes an extension of development and elections.

Conversions have become a signal for violence. The media still talks of the murder of the Australian missionary, Graham Staines, in Odisha. But conversions can also bring about a clash of cosmologies. In Odisha, local tribals will not plough the lands when they think its menstruating. A tribal who becomes a Christian sees no such problem. Two different world views provoke conflict over land.

### **[Read: Propagation without proselytisation: what the law says](#)**

The issue of caste looms large over the controversy. There is an annabel aspect to caste. When the British first came as adventurers and traders and socialised with Indians, there was a hope that they would one day become a caste. There was an ease of interaction which ceased when the missionaries came. Categories and boundaries became harder and the vibes of the adventure followed setting up an even more rigid hierarchy.

The RSS and the Dal want the unity of religion but realise that divisiveness of caste. This prompted a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader to suggest that those who reconvert have the option of fusing their caste. There is a touch of naiveté and yet shrewdness, a sense that the reconversion is another form of Sanskritisation. A tactic for upward mobility. The idea of caste as individual choice would destroy the logic of the caste system.

As we watch these aspects play out, what one notices are different ideas of victimhood and redemption. The Bajrang Dal is offering what it believes to be homecoming. A return to the original state.

### **Using history**

Each group uses history as a shifter. For Dalits, conversion is a rejection of history. For Christians, the threat of reconversion challenges their rights as citizens within a secular framework. Muslims also appeal to the Constitution stating the suggestion that loyalty to any other religion is a threat to patriotism.

What one is facing is a tinderbox of emotions where each group lights its own matchstick. I am personally against conversion. I feel it should be restricted to real changes and beliefs. To use it as a political act, to rectify history or the inequities of caste creates deep violence. When the Bajrang Dal threatens mass conversion, it is playing out a majoritarian tactic of threatening minority being.

There is need for dialogue, debate and its adjustment judgement where our religion must debate belief within a constitutional framework. One has to move with the assumption that every citizen has two critical texts to follow — his own religious code and the Constitution of India. Second, one has to dispense with ugly stereotypes. One has to realise that Muslims are not a democratic threat. Injustice can be restored by rectifying history. Instead of seeing reconversion as homecoming, the majority community needs to make the minority feel at home. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence affects his credibility as a head of the nation loyal to the Constitution.

“Minority leaders have to be less prickly and more reflective about the impact of conversion but it can't be part of a fundamentalist claim to rights”

Yet, minority leaders in turn have to be less prickly and more reflective about the impact of conversion but it can't be part of a fundamentalist claim to rights. There is a politics and even aesthetics to conversion achieved through commodification. One often witnesses this in disaster areas when missionary groups induce conversions in return for

relief. Missionaries have to realise that relief and beliefs have to be kept separate. Yet, Hindutva forces have to understand that Christianity is not a colonial affair in India, but is in fact older in India than in the West.

The current attitudes, whether apoplectic secularism, paranoid minoritarianism or repressive majoritarianism, do not respond to the issue. Let us face it. Our Constitution provides a secular framework, while our multiverse of religions, a world of its intense meaning. Our secularism cannot be empty, our religions cannot be theocratic. What we need is pluralism, a sense of dialogue, acts of storytelling, and where the groups respond creatively to other beliefs. Even if Mr. Modi remains silent, our society must dig deep into its cultures and the Constitution to respond to the latest fundamentalist conundrum.

(Shiv Visvanathan is a professor at Jindal School of Government and Public Policy.)

## **SOCIAL PROBLEMS**

**ASIAN AGE, DEC 24, 2014**

### **New bill passed to benefit slumdweller of capital**

In a move that will provide relief to lakhs of residents in poll-bound Delhi's unauthorised colonies, the Parliament on Tuesday passed a bill that will give residents of these unauthorised colonies protection from demolition for three years, with the government saying it is in advanced stages of regularising 1,200 such colonies.

The National Capital of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second Amendment Bill 2014 was passed by the Rajya Sabha by a voice vote on the last day of the Winter Session. The Lok Sabha had already passed the bill.

Urban development minister M. Venkaiah Naidu said lakhs of people in Delhi live in slums and they cannot be evicted and hence the legislation is the need of the hour for the capital, which is mini-India. He said the BJP government will now take steps towards regularisation of more than 1,200 unauthorised colonies in Delhi. An amendment moved in the bill provides that unauthorised colonies which have come up till June 1, 2014 will be entitled for regularisation. The earlier cut-off date was February 8, 2007.

Joining hands with the ruling BJP on the issue, Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad said, "We do not want full-fledged discussion (on the NCT Bill) because it is related to poor people who come from all over the country. Their houses remain intact, we support the bill."

He said Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi had stopped one such demolition in Delhi recently. He said houses of the poor people should not be demolished during winters. SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav said it was good that on the last day of the session, all members are doing a good job.

## TAXATION

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 24, 2014

### **Delhi government starts drive to boost luxury tax revenue**

By Ambika Pandit

All gyms, spas and banquet halls with annual turnover of over Rs 5 lakh were brought under the purview of luxury tax from 2012.

NEW DELHI: At a time when tourism lacks buoyancy and hotel room occupancy is far from heartwarming, [Delhi government](#) has decided to bolster [luxury tax](#) collections by way of a special drive to get spas, gyms, [banquet halls](#) and [hotels](#) evading tax under the current policy. Showcause notices have been issued to all such establishments and there are plans to carry out random checks of records to catch violators.

Showcause notices have been issued to 600 gyms, 350 spas, 80 banquet halls and 70 hotels found to be out of the state's luxury tax regime. Officials of the state's department of excise and luxury tax said these establishments were identified based on a ground survey by 20 inspection teams. Supplementary information was gathered from internet and field sources.

However, all such establishments may not require to be registered since they have to have a stipulated turnover to qualify. As per the norms, any hotel with a room rent of over Rs 750 is supposed to be registered with the state's luxury tax department. All gyms, [spas](#) and banquet halls with annual turnover of over Rs 5 lakh were brought under the purview of luxury tax from 2012.

Before the showcause notices were issued, government records reflected 1,114 hotels, 243 banquet halls, 258 spas and 108 [gyms](#) as registered under the luxury tax regime. After the notices were issued the department has already added 22 hotels, 30 banquet halls, 31 spas and 6 gyms to its list.

With replies still coming in and random checking of records proposed in some cases, the department is hoping that luxury tax collections will increase despite hotels reflecting low room occupancy. The luxury tax target for the current financial year stands at Rs 400 crore, while collections so far are Rs 219 crore.

Officials said luxury tax collections from hotels where tax is levied on room rent are not looking good. With the growth of cheaper hotels and business centres in the NCR, particularly Gurgaon, market experts see this as the primary reason for the business tourist choosing them over Delhi.

ECONOMIC TIMES, DEC 31, 2014

### **States to get 1-year grace period for implementing GST**

NEW DELHI: [States](#) will get one-year time to implement the provisions of Goods and Services Tax (GST) after introduction of the new indirect tax regime from April 2016.

With states like [Tamil Nadu](#) and [West Bengal](#) still voicing their concerns over GST implementation, the Centre has provided for this one-year extension clause in the [GST Constitutional Amendment Bill](#) which was tabled in the Lok Sabha on December 19.

Touted as the single biggest indirect taxation reform since independence, the GST implementation would create a single tax for goods and services across the country.

"The one-year grace period is only a transitory provision and all states will have to finally implement it. States are on board," a senior official said.

This would "take care of any inconsistency which may arise with respect to any law relating to tax on goods or services or on both in force in any State on the commencement of the provisions of the Act".

A single rate GST will replace central excise, state VAT, entertainment tax, octroi, entry tax, luxury tax and purchase tax on goods and services to ensure seamless transfer.

Some states have opposed introduction of the GST Bill without evolving a consensus on critical aspects like revenue neutral rates and bands, compensation methodology and thresholds.

Gujarat has proposed that the one per cent additional tax that manufacturing states can charge on inter-state trade for two years after GST roll out should not be withdrawn.

West Bengal is also learnt to have raised demand for full one time payment of CST compensation and as well the losses likely to accrue due to abolition of entry tax.

As per the Constitutional Amendment Bill, liquor has been completely kept out of the GST. Petroleum products like petrol and diesel will be part of the new regime from a date to be decided at a future date by the GST Council, which will have two-third of its members from states.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS LINE, DEC 30, 2014

### **Cabinet clears regularisation of unauthorised colonies in Delhi**

The Cabinet on Monday approved a proposal that would regularise about 895 unauthorised colonies that have come up till June 1, 2014, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley informed the media here on Monday.

The Cabinet approved the extension of cut-off date for regularisation from March 31, 2002 to June 1, 2014, a statement from the Ministry of Urban Development said.

The move would benefit around 60 lakh people, the Ministry said, adding that under the guidelines of 2007, the Delhi Government has received applications from 1,639 colonies for regularisation. In addition, another 300 unauthorised colonies have come up since March 31, 2002.

The move comes ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, reportedly being held in February, and will benefit residents of these colonies, who will be able to avail infrastructure, including water, sanitation and electricity.

It will also be easier for an individual interested in buying a house in these colonies to access housing loan facility from banks.

“The Delhi Government also opined that regularisation of unauthorised colonies will bring planned constructions in these colonies under existing building bye-laws and other applicable rules, which in turn, will result in more orderly development of these colonies,” the Urban Development Ministry said.

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