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CIVIL SERVICE

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 6, 2015

Reshuffles: Most key ministries get new secy

But this has been the case with every government

Nivedita Mookerji

It's been only eight months from the time Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) (pictured) met all government secretaries in an atmosphere of bonhomie, soon after taking charge last year.

On June 4, 2014, Modi assured the 75 top [bureaucrats](#) that they could reach out to him anytime. The signal that came out was there should be no cause for fear of a bureaucratic [reshuffle](#) with the change in regime. Some officials had noted the earlier such meeting with a PM was about eight years earlier.

The initial months of the Modi government were slow in top-level changes. However, these have come over a period of time, sometimes in multiples on a given day (rather, the late evening). As of Wednesday, the count of secretary-level appointments and shuffles since the Modi government took over have crossed 50. The latest are the dismissals of home secretary [Anil Goswami](#) and external affairs secretary Sujatha Singh.

Besides new secretaries at both ministries, there were apex changes at the ministries of finance, health, urban development, tourism, labour, housing, coal, steel, disinvestment, defence production, civil aviation, environment, heavy industries, telecom, minority affairs, tribal affairs, panchayati raj, water resources & Ganga rejuvenation, chemicals & petrochemicals, justice, higher education, drinking water & sanitation, and women & child development, among others. Some of the changes, close to 20, were because of secretaries reaching retirement age.

A former secretary told Business Standard: "Any government of the day has the right to choose the head cook." He added most political regimes believe in bureaucratic reshuffles to pursue their own agenda. In favour of the Modi government, he noted the cabinet secretary, Ajit Seth (1974 batch, Uttar Pradesh cadre IAS), has been given extensions, and that the regime has not rushed to effect big changes. "The couple of secretaries who have been told to go recently are the ones making news," he said.

Another former secretary recalled how the earlier government, when it came to power in 2004, was much faster in this regard. Soon after taking charge, the [Manmohan Singh](#) government had removed then cabinet secretary [Kamal Pande](#) (1965 batch, UP cadre IAS), cutting his tenure by five months, appointing [B K Chaturvedi](#) (1966 batch, UP cadre) in his place. Among the other top changes in 2004 were shuttling of then defence secretary [Ajay Prasad](#) to [civil aviation](#) and Home Secretary [Anil Baijal](#) to urban development.

Bureaucrats speak of other big-time shuffles. When the Janata government took over after Indira Gandhi's government was voted out in 1977, many secretaries were sent back to their cadres "in an act of purge", said an official. When [Indira Gandhi](#) came back in 1980, there were again string of changes.

It is tough to say whether the volume of secretary-level changes in the Modi government is higher than in other regimes, especially as retirement is a continuous process, said an official.

The first major bureaucratic change in the Modi government was in October 2014, when [Rajiv Mehrishi](#) (a Rajasthan cadre, 1978 batch IAS) was brought in as department of economic affairs secretary, and later appointed the finance secretary. The then finance secretary, Arvind Mayaram, was moved

to tourism and, within days, to minority affairs. More recently, [Sujatha Singh](#) (1976 batch, IFS) was replaced as foreign secretary by our ambassador to America, [S Jaishankar](#) (1977 batch) and home secretary Anil Goswami (1978 batch, J&K cadre) by department of rural development secretary [L C Goyal](#) (1979 batch, Kerala cadre).

STATESMAN, FEB 6, 2015

Don't hold up senior babus beyond their tenure: Central government

The President, Shri Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh at a reception on the occasion of the Civil Services Day (PIB)

Noting instances of delay, the Centre has directed all ministries under it to ensure that all Additional Secretary-level officers are relieved soon after their tenure are over.

It has also asked them to ensure on "priority basis" that vacancy or posts are regularly updated on an electronic system to process appointments in the government departments.

"Officers coming from their parent cadre and appointed directly as Additional Secretary at the Centre will get a tenure of four years," a directive issued to central government secretaries by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said.

Officers holding the post of Joint Secretary or equivalent at the Centre when appointed to a post at the level of Additional Secretary within two years of being appointed as JS, would get a combined tenure of five years as Joint Secretary or Additional Secretary at the Centre, it said.

The directive comes after it came to notice that officers appointed as Additional Secretary or equivalent level working under various ministries are not being relieved in time, the order said.

All ministries have been directed that unless otherwise directed in the Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC) orders, the prescribed tenure of the officers need to be followed.

Bureaucrats holding the post of Joint Secretary or equivalent at the Centre when appointed to a post at the level of Additional Secretary after completing two years or more (but less than four years) as Joint Secretary, would get a tenure of three years from the date of appointment as Additional Secretary, the DoPT said.

"It is requested that the tenure details of officers or posts under Central Staffing Scheme be updated on priority basis by the ministries or departments concerned in their ACC Vacancy Monitoring System interface in order to enable this office to monitor incumbency or vacancy status effectively," it said.

[DECCAN HERLD, FEB 5, 2015](#)

Bureaucrats to get laptops with 3G connectivity

With the Tamil Nadu government deciding to provide the latest laptops and tablet PCs to bureaucrats, the state's IAS and IPS are likely to go high-tech.

State-owned Electronic Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT) has been given the task of providing both the devices and high-end connectivity technology.

In an order, IT department secretary T K Ramachandran said the government has earmarked Rs 43.40lakh to provide the latest technology to the bureaucrats for a smarter administration.

Laptops and tablets are currently available to only a few IAS and IPs officers with the basic internet connectivity. Now though, the officials would get high-speed 3G data cards along with the devices.

"The recurring cost on connectivity will be reimbursed to the officers from their respective departmental budget according to their ceiling", the IT secretary said. Till now, the government has paid Rs 17.36 lakh. The rest of

the money will be cleared after ELCOT pays the total amount. Each officer will get one year subscription for internet connectivity with the speeds of 7.2 MBPS for five GB data usage per month and 144 KBPS if the data limit exceeds.

A senior Elcot official said tender has already been floated to procure data card and laptops.

HINDU FEB 5, 2015

Chief Secretary faces heat over Games remarks

Cabinet meeting on Wednesday witnessed dramatic scenes over Chief Secretary Jiji Thomson's remarks about the opening ceremony of the 35th National Games on Tuesday with Sports Minister Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan taking strong exception to the remarks.

According to highly placed sources in the government, the Sports Minister did not mince his words when raising the issue in the Cabinet. He demanded to know how the Chief Secretary could make such remarks when he was expected to defend the government. He even went to the extent of referring to the Commonwealth Games and pointed out that the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had listed corruption totalling Rs.744 crore.

He pointed out that the budget for the National Games was finalised by the last government and the attempt of the National Games Organising Committee (NGOC) was only to ensure that the expenditure did not exceed the budget. He was only the working chairman of the NGOC. The Chief Minister was its chairman. If the Chief Secretary had reservations about the conduct of the opening ceremony, he should have raised it at the appropriate forum or discussed with the Sports Minister, Mr. Radhakrishnan said, adding that rather than hearing such criticism, he would resign.

Industries Minister P.K. Kunhalikkutty, Power Minister Aryadan Mohammed and other members of the Cabinet endorsed the stand taken by the Sports Minister and said this was not something expected from Mr. Thomson.

CM's stand

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy agreed with their stand and told the Chief Secretary that he should have been more careful when publicly expressing his views on the subject. The Chief Secretary, the sources said, explained that he had spoken in good faith and with the best of intentions. Mr. Thomson said his intention was to ensure that the controversy over the issue did not go out of hand, and added that he was sorry that his remarks had caused pain to the Sports Minister.

[ASIAN AGE, FEB 5, 2015](#)

Centre sacks Union home secretary in Matang Sinh row

Union home secretary Anil Goswami was on Wednesday sacked from the post in the wake of the controversy over his alleged attempt to stall the arrest of Saradha scam accused Matang Sinh, a former Union minister. Mr Goswami is learnt to have admitted to making the calls to the CBI in the multi-crore-rupee Saradha scam, which is still under investigation, following which home minister Rajnath Singh told him on Tuesday night that his continuation at the top job is “untenable”. The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) on Wednesday stepped in and gave the marching orders to the topmost bureaucrat in the home ministry.

L.C. Goyal, a 1979-batch IAS officer of the Kerala cadre, is tipped to be the next home secretary. Mr Goyal has been sounded out by the government. The order of appointment is being issued by the government, official sources said on Wednesday night. Mr Goyal had earlier served in the home ministry as joint secretary (internal security) a few years ago.

Mr Goswami’s removal caused ripples in the ministry, which saw hectic meetings through the day before the final report was sent to the PMO on the matter. On Wednesday morning, the home minister first gave audience to the home secretary for an hour where Mr Goswami is learnt to have explained the circumstances under which he made the calls but Mr Singh was unconvinced, sources said. Mr Singh then met CBI director Anil Sinha to hear the agency’s version. Sources said that action against a senior CBI official of the rank of joint director is also on the cards for trying to influence the SIT officials probing the Saradha scam.

Mr Goswami, a UPA government appointee, turned 60 last month and his tenure was till June 30. His removal comes a week after the NDA

government curtailed foreign secretary Sujatha Singh's services last Wednesday after she refused to resign from the post.

On Tuesday night, the home minister briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the allegations against Mr Goswami where it was decided that his removal was imminent. Before briefing Mr Modi, the home minister had received a call from Mr Goswami who was in Jammu, sources said, adding that Mr Goswami admitted to have made the calls to the CBI probing the Saradha scam in connection with Mr Sinh's arrest.

The agency had already submitted a report to the PMO on the issue on Tuesday about the involvement of Mr Goswami and a joint director-level officer of the CBI.

On Wednesday, both Mr Goswami and the CBI director maintained silence on their separate meetings with the home minister. Later, the CBI director also met Mr Goswami in his office, hours before the latter resigned.

Mr Goswami, a 1978-batch IAS officer of the Jammu and Kashmir cadre, was appointed as home secretary in 2013 during the UPA government.

He was said to have been close to Mr Sinh, a politician from Assam who was minister of state for home in P.V. Narasimha Rao's government.

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 4, 2015

Don't shy away from media, I&B minister Arun Jaitley tells mantris, babus

NEW DELHI: Government communication could be in for a sea change with information and broadcasting (I&B) minister [Arun Jaitley](#) asking his ministerial colleagues not to shy away from the media while cautioning bureaucrats against propaganda.

"Everybody amongst the ministerial team may not be to the same level familiar with the art of dealing with the media. Slowly, everybody has to be nudged, because we live through the media, we communicate through the media," he said.

Calling for government information that was credible and filled with facts

and figures, Jaitley said, "There is a difference between propaganda and information. Your (civil servant's) job is not propaganda, you are not trained for propaganda. The discipline of a civil servant is not to indulge in propaganda. In my field, we can do it, you can't. Therefore, your real job is that government-centric information has to be put out."

The minister was speaking at the first-ever workshop for over 150 officers on "streamlining communication". Advising bureaucrats to be careful, Jaitley said even contrarian views should be expressed as part of an honest decision-making process of the government. "So, therefore, the use of language, the restraint we exercise in that... Even when there is a contrarian view, it should not be bombshell creating view. It should be a logical possible view," the minister said.

He said while it is difficult to expect civil servants to become the "face", officers could still provide huge information that would interest a large number of people.

While there may be a government set-up, ultimately it is the political leadership that has to lead from the front, he said. "If there are programmes of the ministry, if there are decisions of the ministry, they have to be the best communicators. If some of them get into the shell, then they are wasting an opportunity with no cost and its an opportunity which is to a great advantage," Jaitley said.

Giving the example of his own pre-election blog, Jaitley said it was started with minimal circulation but within a few months, following re-posts by friends, followers and the PM, the circulation had reached 15 million, bigger than any newspaper.

He said as more accurate, factual information from the government travels, its performance becomes more credible and the word spreads. "Once that happens, we don't have to really concentrate so much on the propaganda aspect. It propagates itself," Jaitley said.

Cabinet secretary [Ajit Seth](#) spoke about the need for standard operating procedures for disasters and crises and the fact that government schemes needed to be aggressively communicated. He suggested that [Press Information Bureau](#) should be Press Communication Bureau that suggests two-way communication instead of one way.

While both [Prasar Bharati chairman](#) A Surya Prakash and junior I&B minister Rajyavardhan Rathore underlined caution before tweeting, I&B secretary [Bimal Julka](#) said there ought to be more [Twitter](#) conferences and higher social media interaction by all officers.

Principal director general Frank Naronha reiterated that PIB had a "trust bank" with the media and that was only on the basis of authentic and timely information. He also stressed the need for involving PIB officials at the stage of important decision making to ensure regular information flow.

[TRIBUNE, FEB 3, 2015](#)

Be liberal in sharing info, Jaitley tells bureaucrats

Amid the increasing role being played by social media and altering landscape in the light of round-the-clock television networks, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Arun Jaitley today suggested the government utilise the opportunities in reaching out to the people. Advocating the bureaucracy to be more liberal in sharing information, the minister said the environment today offered tremendous opportunity to stakeholders within the government to disseminate “credible, factual, relevant and reader-friendly information”. Addressing a workshop on ‘Streamlining Government Communication’ organised by Press Information Bureau under the aegis of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and attended by senior officers from various Ministries, Jaitley asked the participants to package data, facts and information keeping in mind contemporary tools and trends, requirement of media, content for opinion makers and analysts in media. There may be a government set-up but it is the political leadership that has to lead from the front, he said adding: “Everybody amongst the ministerial team may not be familiar with the art of dealing with the media. Slowly everybody has to be nudged, because we live through the media, we communicate through the media”. For a person, who has interacted with media over last three decades, Jaitley also stressed that the website platforms were an important medium to address concerns of stakeholders who required information related to the policies and initiatives of the government. The content of the website needed to be in a language which was easy to read and understand. Each ministry also needed to cultivate the mechanism of reaching out to those stakeholders who constituted the wider assembly of people, including representatives of the people/civil society, etc.

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 3, 2015

Dismissal decorum

Govt should take greater care when removing bureaucrats

This weekend, the Defence Research and Development Organisation, or DRDO, successfully test-fired the Agni-5 missile. The head of the DRDO, Avinash Chander, was carried around on the shoulders of his colleagues in celebration - though that was described as a somewhat poignant sight, given that it was also his last day in office. Last month, Mr Chander was summarily dismissed by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, who said it was time for younger people to take over. The haste was puzzling, given that Mr Chander leaves office with no successor chosen as yet - the defence secretary will run the [DRDO](#) directly. Even more oddly, Mr Chander says he was informed of his dismissal by news reports. The last few days also saw the departure of [Sujatha Singh](#) as foreign secretary. Her replacement by Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, formerly ambassador to the United States, had been expected for some time - and the timetable was presumably decided by the fact that Mr Jaishankar was due to retire on the last day of January unless appointed foreign secretary. Still, Ms Singh's removal was handled with surprising gracelessness. By her account, rather than being allowed to resign, the government removed her - because of her unwillingness to delete from her resignation letter a clause saying that she was resigning on the instructions of the prime minister.

Any civil servant serves at the pleasure of the president - that is, as long as she has the confidence of the prime minister and the Cabinet. But wise administrations try and minimise such noise as surrounded the departure of Mr Chander and Ms Singh. It is not that high-handedness begins with this government. This Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has not scaled the level of autocratic behaviour that was on display on occasion when Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were in power. The latter, remember, announced at a press conference his intention to have a new foreign secretary in place, which left the incumbent with no option other than submitting his resignation after that public humiliation. But the current government's model of administration depends in many ways on the civil service being particularly loyal and creative. It is likely that such incidents will add to the fear of the PMO, but not to the loyalty and the creativity. There have been occasions even earlier in the government's term where tenures have been cut short - the head of the Special Protection Group, responsible for the security of the prime minister

and his family, was fired in end-November. And former finance secretary Arvind Mayaram, who was thought to have the trust of the political leadership, nevertheless found himself replaced at short notice a few months ago - not once but twice in quick succession. In the first round, he was appointed the secretary of the tourism ministry and in less than a fortnight he was shifted to the ministry for minority affairs.

The Narendra [Modi government](#) would do well to not repeat the mistakes of earlier dispensations. It came into power with considerable goodwill among the bureaucracy, and Mr Modi's willingness to work with them has been widely remarked upon. Abandoning the decorum that should accompany senior appointments might be tempting, as it has been for governments in the past, but it would not just be a bad idea in terms of institutional strength - it might also backfire on the government's agenda.

Letters: Managing civil servants

This refers to the editorial "Dismissal decorum" (February 3). It is true that a [civil servant](#) serves at the pleasure of the President. But that does not account for a peremptory removal. There are other ways and means to sideline or punish the recalcitrant individual.

The dismissal will only affect the officers' morale and initiative, and in the long term, even their efficiency. With a powerful political boss hovering over their heads, [bureaucrats](#) will look over their shoulders all the time. In order to be in the good books of their bosses, they will try to check all the boxes or sign on the dotted line. This scenario will only make people vegetate. Moreover, from their reports, it will be difficult to analyse any situation or development correctly.

Quoting the previous cases of precipitate removals by the powers-that-be to cover up their current high-handed behaviour will not serve any purpose. Instead, our leaders should learn a lesson from the mistakes of their predecessors, who were used to taking no prisoners.

[DECCAN HERALD, FEB 1, 2015](#)

Retired employees can now avail benefits of missed promotions

Retired government employees who missed out on their promotions due to late meetings of the committees deciding on such departmental elevations will now be able to avail its post-retirement benefits.

"Instructions have been issued to all ministries and departments to give benefit of promotion to those employees who missed it due to late meeting of Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC)," an official in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said.

It would not be in order if eligible employees, who were within the zone of consideration for the relevant year but are not actually in service when the DPC is being held, are not considered while preparing year-wise zone of consideration or panel, as per the DoPT order.

Consequently, their juniors are considered (in their place) for promotions, who would not have been in the zone of consideration if the DPC had been held in time, it said.

"Appointment Committee of Cabinet has observed that DPCs often do not consider such eligible officers who are retiring before the occurrence of the vacancy in the panel year," the order said, adding that this "undesirable trend negate the very purpose" of government's existing instructions for inclusion of such employees.

There have been reports that some of the eligible retired employees are not being given the benefit of promotion which they missed due to late DPCs. In fact the DPCs were being held very late, the official said.

The DoPT has asked all central government ministries and departments under it to ensure "strict compliance" of its instructions to include retiring employees for promotions in case the DPCs are delayed.

Such retired officials would, however, have no right for actual promotion, the DoPT official said.

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 2, 2015

**PMO wanted Sujatha Singh to delete Modi's reference in her letter
Singh was recently replaced as the foreign secretary by S Jaishankar**

Former foreign secretary, [Sujatha Singh](#) said on Saturday her offer to take early retirement was rejected as the Prime Minister's Office wanted to delete a reference that she was doing so, on the instructions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Singh's tenure was abruptly "curtailed".

Singh said External Affairs Minister [Sushma Swaraj](#) informed her on Wednesday afternoon that the PM wanted to appoint [S Jaishankar](#) as the Foreign Secretary.

Singh said she had sent a letter that evening seeking early retirement "as instructed by the Prime Minister".

But she got a call from the Prime Minister's Office "asking me if I would consider deleting it (the words)..."

The former FS said she made it clear that "I would not" delete reference to the Prime Minister. "It was on the instructions of the Prime Minister and as a good civil servant, we follow instructions," she told Karan Thapar on Headlines Today.

To a question, Singh claimed someone within the government was planting stories against her in the media and maintained that she does not believe in leaking privileged information to journalists.

The career diplomat made it clear that the "chapter was over" for her and she would concentrate on gardening and weaving, indicating that she was not looking for another a political engagement.

DEFENCE, NATIONAL

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 3, 2015

MHA for pay on par with Army for paramilitary forces

[Vijaita Singh](#)

In a move that will benefit over nine lakh paramilitary personnel, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has proposed to the Seventh Pay Commission a “special pay” on par with the Army and has also batted for a better leave structure for the personnel who are deployed for counter-insurgency operations across the country. If MHA’s proposal to give extra allowance to the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel is accepted, a constable will be richer by at least Rs 48,000 per annum.

The Seventh pay Commission was constituted by the UPA government in February 2014, just before they went out of power. The MHA has also proposed creation of the post of a “head constable” in every section (roughly comprising 11 personnel) for better promotion opportunity.

“A standard company of any paramilitary generally consists of 100 personnel, which has nine sections. Presently there are only two head constables (HC) per section and if the MHA’s proposal is accepted, one more post of HC will be added,” said a senior official.

The Seventh Pay Commission will revise the salaries of over 50 lakh central government employees and remuneration of 30 lakh pensioners. The Sixth Pay Commission that was set up in 2006 cost the exchequer an additional Rs 26,035 crore.

A large number of paramilitary forces officers have quit in the last five years due to stagnation and tough working conditions. Around 9,000 personnel quit BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF and SSB due to unfavourable working conditions.

“While in the Army an officer is entitled to 20 casual leaves and jawans are entitled for 30 casual leaves, in the CAPF all the personnel are entitled to 15 days casual leave. The MHA has proposed to increase this too,” the official said. “It has been a longstanding demand of CAPF to provide them parity with the Army as the nature of their duties have changed over the years. They are deployed in areas affected by Maoists, which have tough living conditions and are also prone to high risk,” the official said.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, FEB 3, 2015

Columns: Keeping the NITI Aayog relevant

The recent political and institutional developments have underlined the need to calibrate reforms by both the Union and state governments in a coordinated manner. In particular, the elevation of a chief minister of a state as the prime minister of the country is seen to bring about states' perspective in policy calibration. Similarly, the replacement of the Planning Commission with the NITI Aayog, with a mandate to strengthen co-operative federalism and provide a platform for healthy intergovernmental competition brings the focus on coordination and governance between the Union and states.

It is not that the states' policies and their governance were not important in the past. Surely, they played very important roles. However, brought up in the staple diet of centralised planning, the focus of discussion was on Delhi and even after the market-based reforms were initiated in 1991, the discussion on policy environment was Delhi-centric and the practice of the Planning Commission approving state plans only added to this. Indeed, after dismantling of the protectionist regime and licence-permit raj, the second generation reforms should have had a predominant state focus to ensure efficient public service provision, competitive levels of infrastructure and effective regulation to deal with predatory competition, information asymmetry and market imperfections.

Intergovernmental co-operation, both vertically between the levels of government and horizontally among the units within each of the levels is important in every federation to ensure harmonious calibration of policies and to ensure a common market. At the same time, co-operation can work only in an environment of mutual trust. When the parties in power at the Union and in the state are different, it is necessary to have systems and institutions for fostering co-operation. It is also important that these systems and institutions should have credibility and enjoy trust and confidence of both the Union and the states.

Although the Constitution specifies the functional domains of the Union and states, overlapping cannot be avoided and in such cases, co-operation among the participating governments is necessary. There are concurrent responsibilities and some of them, like energy and environment, have an

important bearing on sustainable development. In the case of Union government functions too, the states can be co-opted as agencies for implementation. The Union government may have a role even in functions listed for the states to ensure desired minimum standards in respect of the services with significant externalities, merit goods and for redistributive reasons. Cooperation is necessary also in carrying out tax reforms like the introduction of the goods and services tax (GST) and to remove impediments to internal trade or even in the case of conduct of foreign policy if it affects the states.

However, there are limits to co-operation, for the relationship between governmental units is essentially competitive. Extreme form of co-operation could rob flexibility and autonomy to the states for catering to the diversified preferences. Once the Constitution ensures the division of powers between the Union and the states which are not extinguishable, it provides a ground for both vertical and horizontal competition. As Albert Breton and Pierre Salmon have argued, people and opposition parties benchmark the best performances of different levels of government and would pressurise their governments to perform according to the set benchmarks. The chances of being voted to power will depend on the confidence of the voters on the political party which conforms best to the benchmark.

Intergovernmental competition can be a source of dynamism as has well been demonstrated. In China, the competition among the state enterprises required the local governments to create enabling environment. However, unless certain preconditions are met, and effective regulation is put in place, competition can be predatory and rather than being a source of dynamism, it can turn out to be a source of exploitation of the weak states by the strong ones. The important preconditions are (i), there should be a measure of “competitive equality” in the sense that every state should have the capacity to provide comparable levels of public services at comparable tax rates; (ii) “cost-benefit appropriability”, that is no state should be able to pass on the burden of its expenditures on non-residents or indulge in acts of protectionism. These conditions imply that resource allocation will be guided by comparative advantage in terms of resource endowments. The states will be faced with hard budget constraints and while their dependence on transfers is inevitable, care should be taken to avoid perverse incentives while designing transfers. There should not be any bailouts. There should be free and unimpeded factor- and product-markets throughout the country.

Thus, imparting dynamism in a federation requires both fostering co-operation to calibrate policies in a coordinated manner and harnessing competition to enhance efficiency and productivity. This requires an institutional platform in which both the Union and the state governments come together to bargain, coordinate and resolve conflicts. As mentioned earlier, co-operation is possible when all the parties to the bargain gain and if there are gainers and losers, there is a mechanism for the losers to be adequately compensated. Often, the gains from a policy initiative may not be clear or if the extent of gains and losses are not transparent, there can be gaming by the competing parties. Therefore, there must be an independent platform for bargaining and conflict resolution and high quality research to quantify and demonstrate the implications of co-operation and competition.

One of the major shortcomings in Indian federation is the absence of such an institution. In the initial years after independence, bargaining and conflict resolution was conducted in an informal environment, thanks to the single-party rule and the confidence and trust enjoyed between the regional and central leaders due to the long years of the freedom struggle and sacrifices made by them. The end of single-party rule, the emergence of coalition governments with regional parties as pivotal members of the coalition and shortening time horizons of politicians have brought to the fore the imperativeness of having an independent institutional mechanism for intergovernmental bargaining and conflict resolution. The objective of creating Inter-State Council to undertake this task was defeated by placing it in the Union home ministry. It hardly provided a platform for resolving Union-state and inter-state issues. The National Development Council too did not fill the place as it became a forum for delivering speeches! The newly created NITI Aayog is supposed to fill this void. The relevance of NITI will critically depend on fulfilling this task and it remains to be seen how it evolves.

By M Govinda Rao

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EDUCATION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 6, 2015

'DU's innovation centre needs no AICTE approval'

Gauri Kohli

Started in 2011 with a thrust on innovation and research, Delhi University's Cluster Innovation Centre (CIC) offers a unique BTech programme in IT and mathematical innovations. But CIC students are concerned about the status of their course, change in their course structure and availability of transcripts. "This can be a huge concern if another institution or organisation raises this question once we go in for a master's degree or apply for a job," says Madhav Mishra (name changed), a student.

The first batch of the BTech course will be graduating this year. Since CIC was established by the university, its officials say it does not need an AICTE approval. "Any department or centre that is part of a university governed by the UGC rules is in no way under the jurisdiction of the AICTE. Functioning of CIC is decided by the university's academic and executive councils within the framework of UGC rules," says Professor Madan Chaturvedi, director, CIC.

After the Supreme Court's last judgment in May 2014 which clarified that prior approval of AICTE is compulsory and mandatory for conduct of technical course by existing affiliated technical colleges for the academic year 2014-15, does this mean that the CIC is fully exempted from taking an AICTE approval and can function as per its own rules?

"If a Central or a State university is running a programme in its own department, it does not need an AICTE approval upfront, provided it follows the rules and regulations laid down by the AICTE. If an institute affiliated to a university is running a BTech programme, it requires an approval from the AICTE," says SS Mantha, former chairman, AICTE.

However, there are other pertinent questions that the students and the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) have raised. CIC was earlier offering BTech /BS innovation with mathematics and IT. The course structure and name were then changed in 2014. Since course structure and

name of the degree has been changed, the question is what degree will the outgoing batch be awarded? If the new one, will their course structure reflect the latest one?

Bibhu Biswal, programme coordinator, BTech (IT and mathematical innovations), says, “The change of the name and the structure are two separate decisions of the academic council. The new name of the degree is valid for all students passing out from the year 2015 onwards. So the first outgoing batch this year will obtain the degree BTech (IT and mathematical innovations). Their syllabus has not been changed. Their transcript will reflect the structure of the course approved in 2011-2012 session when they took admission. This will also be the case for the batch of students taken admission in 2012-13 sessions. The change in the course structure and the new syllabus is valid for the batches taken admission from 2013-2014 sessions onwards. Their transcript will reflect that.”

The centre also started a course called BTech (humanities) under the Meta College concept but the name was changed to BA (hons) humanities and social sciences last year. DUTA members had also submitted a white paper to the visitor (President of India), MHRD and UGC citing violations of the UGC Act in setting up of CIC. “Three courses conducted under CIC are in violation of the UGC rule that require such courses to be sent to the UGC for approval six months prior to introduction. The course was neither designed nor approved by any of the statutory bodies specified in Statute 10, Ordinance XIV-B(6) and Regulation 16-A(4) for the introduction of a new course so that all scrutiny of its structure and content was excluded,” says the paper. Meetings with the executive and academic councils were also convened without the necessary prior notice, the paper stated.

About CIC

The centre was set up to develop ideas into innovative applications CIC was established in 2011 and works in collaboration with National Innovation Council, government of India

It has collaborated with organisations like Defence Research Development Organisation and PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industries

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 5, 2015

HRD ministry appoints RSS's Inder Mohan Kapahy as a UGC member

By [Aman Sharma](#)

The human resource development ministry has appointed Professor Inder Mohan Kapahy as a member of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

NEW DELHI: The human resource development ministry has appointed as a member of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Professor [Inder Mohan Kapahy](#), a long-time member of [RSS](#) and founding member of the National Democratic Teachers' Front that led a successful fight against Delhi University's four-year undergraduate programme last year after the Narendra Modi-led NDA government came to power.

Kapahy had met [HRD minister Smriti Irani](#) several times over the issue and also demanded an inquiry against [Delhi University](#) vice-chancellor Dinesh Singh for alleged financial irregularities. Irani later wrote to President [Pranab Mukherjee](#) for initiating action against Singh.

The ministry appointed Kapahy as a [UGC](#) member on January 27, as per an official notification accessed by ET. "In exercise of the powers conferred by the University Grants Commission Act, 1956, the central government hereby appoints Inder Mohan Kapahy, Professor, School of Applied Sciences, Maharaja Agrasen University, [Himachal Pradesh](#), as a member of the University Grants Commission with immediate effect for a term of three years or till further orders, whichever is earlier," the notification says.

Kapahy has been associated for long with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, ruling BJP's ideological mentor, and has been writing articles for the RSS mouthpiece, Organiser. "I feel this appointment is recognition of the contribution a grass-roots teacher like me can make in decision-making at the apex education body, UGC," Kapahy told ET.

UGC has 10 members, with Professor Ved Prakash as the chairperson. Asked if his political leanings as a RSS activist could have played a role in the appointment, Kapahy said, "Political ideology does not matter in posts like a UGC member. RSS has got nothing to do with this. It is only that some people in the RSS are known to me." In his role as the NDTF founding member, Kapahy had last year pointed to allegedly unapproved expenditure

of over Rs 170 crore for buying more than 50,000 laptops in Delhi University from OBC funds.

[ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 2, 2015](#)

Two-day vice-chancellors' conference at Rashtrapati Bhavan from February 4

President Pranab Mukherjee has also been convening regularly conferences of Directors of NITs, IITs, IISERs and IISC.

NEW DELHI: [President Pranab Mukherjee](#) will host a two-day conference of vice-chancellors of 39 central universities from February 4.

Mukherjee has convened the conference for deliberating on action on previous recommendations; steps to create an eco-system for research and innovation with participation of industry and research institutions; capacity development of faculty, creating international and national networks, adoption of choice based credit system etc, a statement from Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

The President is a visitor to these universities. This is the third such conference of central university VCs.

Mukherjee has also been convening regularly conferences of Directors of NITs, IITs, IISERs and IISC, it said.

[Union Minister](#) of Human Resource Development Smriti Irani, Ministers of State for Human Resource Development; Chairman, [University Grants Commission](#) and Vice Chancellors of 39 Central Universities will attend the conference.

[TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 4, 2015](#)

Surya namaskar made compulsory in 48,000 schools Rajasthan

JAIPUR: Amid protests from different corners, the education department issued orders on Tuesday for government and private schools to introduce surya namaskar in all secondary and senior secondary classes with immediate effect.

The order issued by office of director secondary education, Rajasthan says that every secondary and senior secondary school has to hold 20 minute assembly or bal sabhas everyday which includes surya namaskar, meditation and paper reading. Effectively this order will be applicable for little over 48,000 schools including 28,000 government schools (secondary and above).

The order issued by the office is in line with that of Madhya Pradesh government which issued a similar directions a long time back. The order divides 20 minutes into three segments including first five minutes for prayers, national song, oath and group song. The next 10 minutes are for surya namaskar, yoga and meditation while the last five minutes for newspaper reading in both Hindi and English.

Suwalal, director of Secondary Education in Rajasthan, said, "The order is aimed at improving the educational environment along with strengthening mental and physical fitness." While MP had implemented surya namaskar only in government schools, Rajasthan has gone a step ahead by asking private schools as well to introduce it.

A source said that surya namaskar, prayers and meditation cannot be exercised without chanting of mantras. The order didn't go down well with schools run by Arya Samaj, Muslim community and Christian missionary schools. These groups are objecting the move stating that this order is 'divisive' to the secular credentials of our nation. TOI called up several private schools which chose to be silent on the order.

The move was hinted earlier by education minister Vasudev Devnani who told TOI that that they are working towards evoking a sense of nationalism, ancient Indian value system and culture in students while justifying his stand on introducing yoga and Indian value system in classrooms from the next session.

The minister had directed all the schools to hold Saraswati Puja to mark the occasion of Basant Panchmi this January 24. The state has over 1.20 lakh schools including 85,000 government and 35,000 private schools which are catering to 1.31 crore students in 2013-14 academic session.

ELECTIONS

TELEGRAPH, FEB 2, 2015

Déjà vu in Delhi

- It takes an election to make dilliwallahs urban Mukul Kesavan

The Delhi elections should be an annual event, like the Jaipur Festival. They're fun, they're free (well, the voting is) and they perk the city up, they make this sprawling, surly dustbowl coherent. Strangers approach without uttering menaces, they are enthusiastic and sociable, and everywhere people gather purposefully without making other people afraid. It takes an election to make *dilliwallahs* urban.

This wasn't always the case. Before Delhi acquired a Vidhan Sabha in 1991, its politics was drearily municipal, almost entirely overshadowed by its status as the Union's capital. Even its municipal politics was fragmented, divided as it was into three urban bodies: the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the New Delhi Municipal Council and the Delhi Cantonment Board. Its politicians, both from the Jan Sangh (later the Bharatiya Janata Party) and the Congress, were resolutely parochial figures, machine politicians who mattered to no one beyond their constituencies.

In my childhood, Delhi's politics was dominated by the Jan Sangh. Madan Lal Khurana, Vijay Kumar Malhotra and Kedarnath Sahani made this city of small shopkeepers a bastion of majoritarian politics. Flawed though the leaders of the Jan Sangh might have been, they seemed positively genteel compared to the gang of Congress politicians who dominated Delhi's political landscape in the 1980s, men like H.K.L. Bhagat, Sajjan Kumar and the durable Jagdish Tytler. These men did come to national attention, but for the wrong reasons: their behaviour during the Congress-led pogrom that targeted Sikhs after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984.

When Delhi became a state of sorts, thanks to the 69th Amendment, there was great excitement, and the BJP won a handsome victory in the inaugural election in 1993. A series of BJP notables - Vijay Kumar Malhotra, Sahib Singh Verma, Sushma Swaraj - took turns at being chief minister. But thanks to the remarkable success of Sheila Dikshit in making Delhi a Congress borough from 1998 to 2013, Delhi's politics went back to being predictable and local.

The turning point in the history of Delhi's politics was the assembly election of 2013, when the Aam Aadmi Party led by an inspired Arvind Kejriwal turned both customary wisdom and poll predictions on their head and won enough seats to form a government, which famously lasted 49 days before it committed suicide. For six months between the assembly elections in Delhi and the results of the Parliamentary elections in May 2014, a politics incubated in Delhi seemed central to the politics of India... and then the bubble burst. The AAP won four parliamentary seats in all and none in Delhi. The BJP won a resounding majority and Narendra Modi towered over a political landscape populated by runts and pygmies. Good governance, responsible realism and Amit Shah seemed to carry all before them.

So why are anchors and pundits excitedly discussing snap polls in late January 2015 when the real polls ought to be a foregone conclusion? Is the resurgent excitement about the AAP's prospects one last spasm of wishful thinking by a defeated commentariat routed by Modi and the BJP? Or does the gossip about Kiran Bedi's induction and the BJP's panic and Kejriwal's new confidence bear witness to the durability of populist politics in India's largest urban cluster? Does it tell us something about the likely trajectory of politics in an urbanizing India, more generally?

The BJP's calculation in this election has been that the promise of economic dynamism through good governance and charismatic leadership which won them the national election and then a series of assembly elections, should carry the day in Delhi too. Kiran Bedi's co-option has been read as anxiety about this formula not working in the national capital. This might be true, but it is at least as likely that the BJP always saw Kiran Bedi as an ally within India Against Corruption and adopted her as a mascot to lay claim to a share of Anna Hazare's legacy - the authoritarian, discipline-and-punish part of it that fits the *sangh parivar's* vision of a well-drilled nation.

In this reading, Kiran Bedi, former policewoman and inspector-general of Delhi's prisons, is seamlessly assimilated to Narendra Modi's rhetoric of good, stable governance. She brings the virtuous cachet of India Against Corruption *minus* the insurgent insolence that was Kejriwal's unique contribution. Thus, she is stable, constant, experienced and true where Kejriwal is mercurial, untried, a *bhagora* and an anarchist. I don't find it hard to believe that Amit Shah picked Kiran Bedi out as a trump card early on and played her late to finesse Kejriwal.

I do believe, though, that the move hasn't worked for two reasons. The first, less important, reason has to do with Kiran Bedi's shortcomings as a political candidate. Humourless self-righteousness might work for a 'social activist' (it might even be a credential), but it is an unattractive quality in a politician. Confronted by an audience or an interviewer, Bedi begins with smiling generalities and ends with teacherly scolding. She converses in telegraphic talking points that are sometimes surreally at odds with the questions she's being asked. It isn't hard to see why her handlers don't want her to debate Kejriwal and her refusal to engage does seem to be hurting the BJP's prospects in Delhi.

But Bedi's *persona* wouldn't matter so much if the BJP's understanding of the legacy of India Against Corruption was accurate. It isn't. The BJP seems to believe that the extraordinary support the IAC mobilized in Delhi and urban India was provoked by corruption and can, therefore, be addressed by good, honest governance. This is an overly literal reading: corruption in the hands of the AAP was a metaphor for the misery inflicted on citizens by an opaque, unaccountable and distant State.

The rudeness and insolence that became Kejriwal's trademarks during his first campaign, thrilled his supporters not because their natural home was an anarchist mob, but because it was a public and dramatic way of putting the State, its agents and its enablers in their place. The white Ambassador with its red light and siren, the VIP cavalcade, the predatory cop and the untouchable private corporation became symbols of a system that shuts out its citizens. The obverse of this was that fabled beast, the Lok Pal, a Grand-Inquisitor-cum-dragon that would keep an incorrigible system honest, plus radical devolution that would bring the State within the reach of the neighbourhoods and localities in which citizens live.

Delhi is wall-papered with wonderfully detailed portraits of Narendra Modi wearing *kurtas* of many colours, but only two expressions. The first, early batch of posters has Modi, not smiling precisely, but looking gracious. The second, more common sort, has him impressively groomed as always, but impassive, formidable. Kejriwal's posters are more animated: one of them has him in a crowd being greeted by an old man.

Modi's charisma, Kiran Bedi's administrative experience and the BJP's rhetoric of good governance do not directly address radical disenchantment with an opaque and centralized system. Delhi's election will turn on whether

the urban citizen's angry scepticism about the State is allayed by the pharaonic reassurance offered by Modi or harnessed by Kejriwal's theatrical promise to cut Leviathan down to size. Meanwhile, we can enjoy the BJP's questions, the AAP's answers and Kiran Didi's bid to be a small star to Modi's sun. To nit-picking idiots who point out that small stars are big suns up close, she might gnomically say, as she has said elsewhere, "That's my choice. That's my choice. And you have to respect it."

FINANCE

TELEGRAPH, FEB 4, 2015

From vision to reality: The national budget in 2015 must accelerate reforms

Commentarao: S.L. Rao

The National Democratic Alliance's first budget was a disaster. It did not paint Narendra Modi's vision for the Indian economy nor was it a delivery of Modi's grand election promises. It was a bureaucrat's budget speech. A minister who was unfamiliar with the subject had no overarching vision.

It did not confirm Modi's intention to move the country from a statist economy to a regulated market economy. It did not cut the deficit and subsidies, prune social welfare programmes, make social schemes more effective and efficient, announce measures to implement cash benefit transfers, roll out a micro banking system, make nationalized banks into efficient commercial entities, give timelines for introducing the goods and services tax and the direct tax code, announce changes to make it easier to do business in India, remove the anomalies in the tax system, improve efficiencies in the public sector and stop supporting sick or inefficient enterprises.

Of course, since the budget, crores of bank accounts for the masses were opened, making cash benefit transfers possible; foodgrain stocks were released to combat food inflation, bottlenecks on account of rigid environmental restrictions were relaxed, land legislation made less restrictive for land acquisition, foreign direct investment was increased in defence and insurance, labour law reform was begun in some Bharatiya Janata Party states. The budget for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was cut and given to building agricultural assets. Other announcements (no actions) were about disinvestment - as in Coal India, public sector and nationalized bank autonomy and so on.

The 2015 budget will make or break this government's image of a gung-ho reforming one. Either the economy will stumble along as it did under the previous prime minister or it will rise on a new trajectory.

The 2015 budget must also incorporate the Venugopal Reddy finance commission report. Raising the state share of Central funds to a reported 50 per cent will compel severe cuts elsewhere. The Reserve Bank of India has,

on January 16, begun the easing of interest rates, responding to the decline in inflation globally and in India. The balance of payments and the rupee have improved.

Even China, with massive debts incurred domestically by the provinces, is faltering and might do worse. Only India and the United States of America show reasonable growth. However, in an interconnected world, weaknesses in most world economies, should warn us to hold our gross domestic product growth rates at about 2 per cent above other emerging economies. A target of 6 per cent in 2015 and perhaps seven in 2016 might not unbalance the economy.

The 2015 budget must eliminate undeserved beneficiaries, reforming delivery to reduce subsidies. Direct cash benefit transfers have begun with liquefied petroleum gas and support schemes for minorities. Their extension can reduce substantial leakages and thefts of funds. Top priority must be given to introducing this in the public distribution system and the Food Corporation of India, the MGNREGA and electricity subsidies. Reforms in administrative, institutions, public sector autonomy and ownership must be implemented fast. Resistance from entrenched bureaucracies must be crushed.

The tabled amendments to the Electricity Act, 2003 are inadequate. The budget must find ways to eliminate cross-subsidies by states, forbid creation of "regulatory assets" and so on. These prevent the developing of electricity markets, promote tariff populism, pile massive distribution company losses and debts.

The inefficiencies of Central government-owned enterprises reduce GDP by at least 1.5 per cent per year. Disinvestment is a short-sighted revenue generation exercise. Private shareholders are still powerless to improve efficiencies. The budget must lay out a roadmap for the privatization of state enterprises and nationalized banks. In the interim, the autonomy of managements and boards must be ensured.

To achieve efficient markets and competitive private and public enterprises, strong regulatory frameworks are essential. A truly independent selection of boards, CEOs and statutory regulators - chosen from among all professions and not merely retired bureaucrats - must be announced. The Companies Act has provisions that improve over-seeing by the board and these must apply

to all state enterprises. Remunerations to managers and CEOs in state enterprises must be competitive with regard to private ones. Tenure and termination must be the board's, not the government's, decisions.

Agriculture must receive infrastructure build-up. The government must announce that there will be no loan write-offs. Agricultural markets must be allowed to operate independently. Minimum support prices should be set by experts, and not aimed at political gain. Diversion (like water in the Vidarbha to sugar factories) must be penalized.

Drastic reforms in government procedures must stimulate industry: such as, streamlining and coordinating procedures, eliminating the inspector *raj* and delays in various approvals, reducing delays in allowing new enterprises. Retrospective taxes must be categorically abandoned. Transfer pricing rules are now being made crystal clear. Foreign investors imagine that majority equity gives IPR protection in spite of Indian employees. But there is no loss to India if limits on foreign investment are removed and there is stimulus. State legislatures must be encouraged to imitate the labour reforms of Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

The largest employment (counting self-employment) is in small-scale and cottage industries. Independent bodies must be set up to improve their access to finance, organized and online marketing, reasonably priced materials, training and supplies for absorbing technological advances. Governments have done little so far. For substantial additional employment generation, small-scale and cottage industries must get these supports.

Development finance is today mostly from nationalized banks, which are reeling with non-performing assets. Long-term investors, such as those relying on provident fund, pension and gratuity, must be enabled to invest with protection to the investor. Development finance institutions may have to be revived. Foreign investment from the US, Japan and China should be monitored and protected by an empowered mechanism.

Loopholes must be plugged. These enable black or unaccounted for money to be held in India and abroad. The exemption from capital gains tax to Mauritius-based investments must go. States should be persuaded to reduce property tax rates. People pay in black money to avoid property tax. To improve housing supplies, the floor space index must be raised and rent

control abolished. State governments must also be persuaded to copy Karnataka's self-assessment scheme for property tax to enhance collections.

Other measures should include introducing the direct tax code, rationalizing minimum alternate tax rates, increasing effectiveness of Central VAT, accelerating introduction of the GST with the phasing out of present compromises.

Administrative services reform is fundamental. Promotions, transfers, punishments, tenures of administrative officials should be decided by an independent body like the Union Public Service Commission. At present, administrators comply with political demands. The external recruitment of experts and permission for government servants to work in non-governmental organizations for a few years should be encouraged.

Statutory regulators and tribunals must be insulated from political machinations. Appointments of retired senior bureaucrats ensure such compliance. Selection committees should be neutral, independent, objective. Academia, media, business and so on must be selectors. Appointments of *lokayuktas* in each state and *lokpals* at the Centre must be expedited.

Health, education, skills development and faculty development, need far more funds. It is disheartening that the government has decided to reduce funds for health. Public health, particularly drinking water and sanitation, also need substantial funding. We need many more schools, colleges, professional institutions, more faculty of better quality, not merely buildings.

State ownership of and control over economic resources must be replaced by market orientation under tough independent regulation. There will be misuse but this can be corrected by regulators with penal powers. Today, there is little accountability for losses to investors because of government inaction. Theft of resources, misuse of power, and the failure to achieve outcomes go unpunished.

Transformation is essential if the nation is to reach its potential. The country must change direction from statism to enterprise under independent regulation. Budget 2015 must provide the funds and the right policies for this to happen.

The author is former director-general, National Council of Applied Economic Research

GOVERNORS

DECCAN HERALD, FEB 4, 2015

Guv wrong in making Hindi speech

The office of the governor may be ceremonial and, if at all, equipped with limited powers. But the institution of the governor is highly symbolic and is meant to reflect the aspirations of the people and the democratic process of which it is part.

Every word and action of the governor is, therefore, far more important than one would have expected of such an office. In this context, the maiden speech in Hindi of Karnataka Governor Vajubhai R Vala to the joint sitting of the legislative assembly and council on Monday needs to be condemned as it went against the spirit of the occasion.

While Vala may have done nothing wrong technically, what was deplorable was the fact that he chose to speak to an audience of Kannada-speaking legislators in Hindi despite the fact that most of whom did not know the language.

Booklets of translations in English and Kannada may have been provided to the legislators but that is small consolation as the gathering had to sit through the occasion unable to figure out what Vala was saying as there was no live translation of his speech.

It may be difficult for native Hindi-speakers to digest this but the fact is south of the Vindhyas, and that includes the Karnataka legislature, most people follow English better. This was one of the reasons why after independence, Parliament decided to have English along with Hindi as the country's official language. Many are of the misled view that Hindi is the national language. This is not the case.

All languages under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution including Hindi share the same status. Vala's address in Hindi is equivalent to a governor from Karnataka insisting on addressing say, a North Indian legislature in Kannada.

Even with the necessary translations provided, would that not have caused a major furore? That being the case, Vala should have respected the local

knowledge base and culture and spoken in English as he obviously does not know Kannada.

The BJP's stand that since Hindi is not a foreign language it is alright for Vala to make his speech in it is a weak defence. Vala's disdain for English flies in the face of India's current reality where this language is much sought after, understood and indeed the preferred mode of communication of the middle-class. Not just that, English is an aspirational target of the underprivileged who see in it a way out of their difficult living conditions.

By making his speech in Hindi, Vala may have done his bit to fuel apprehensions among non-Hindi speaking states that the Central Government and its representatives are trying to impose the language on the south, in many different ways.

HEALTH SERVICES

BUSINESS LINE, FEB 3, 2015

Healthcare – make it smart and cheap

The US-India initiative should help. The twin objectives of affordable healthcare and IPR should be reconciled

The governments of India and the US have released a joint statement affirming the two countries' commitment to work together in a number of key areas, including intellectual property rights and healthcare-related trade.

Both countries have agreed to “strengthen collaboration, dialogue and co-operation between the regulatory authorities of the two countries to ensure safety, efficacy and quality of pharmaceuticals, including generic medicines” and want to ensure that “the poorest populations in India and the US have access to quality healthcare (while) identifying ways in which trade and innovation policies can enhance access to quality health and affordable medicines”.

India needs systems in place to identify and respond to quality issues throughout the product lifecycle (in this case, generic and other drugs), before these become problems.

Policies and conflicts

An examination of endemic problems in the pharmaceutical sector, such as chronic drug shortages and inadequate modernisation in the drug-manufacturing sector, is necessary.

We need not imitate the model adopted in the US, but it would be useful to strategically position in India an Office of Pharmaceutical Quality (call it by any other name if so desired, but revamp our present systems), so that the regulatory authorities are on tap, as well as on top of it all.

The Ministry of Commerce had placed in the public domain (till January 30, 2015), a draft national policy that will revamp India's IPR policy and “stimulate innovation”.

The Ministry of Health has placed in the public domain its Draft National Health Policy 2015 (till February 28, 2015). Immediate inter-ministerial

dialogue must ensure that these two national policies do not work at cross-purposes.

A word of caution is in order here. It is never enough in India for medicines to be merely affordable. These must simultaneously be accessible and available in every block headquarters. If patent monopolies are to drive innovation (as proposed in the draft new policy on IPRs), in that event, drugs and medicines will remain neither affordable nor accessible!

It is for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to remain vigilant about its own goals and resolve these contradictions.

The India-US Joint Statement states that the Healthcare Dialogue is slated to cover “affordable healthcare, cost saving mechanisms, distribution barriers, patent quality, health services, information technology and complementary and traditional medicine”.

The world over, current health care systems are being overtaken by rapid technology transformation, data-driven diagnosis, new discoveries in medicine, a healthier population, and a focus on chronic conditions.

Healthcare in India is under-served and over-consumed. India did not invest in an integrated public health system involving food safety, water management, waste disposal, vector control, sanitation systems, health education and health regulation. Quality of care is compromised on account of limited accreditation, and low adoption of basic technologies.

Affordable healthcare

The Healthcare Dialogue between both countries would enable India to make that great leap forward to move beyond the manufacture of generic drugs and emerge as an innovation hub in lower cost health products and services.

It can also help boost local manufacturing, and transform India into an export hub for medical products and equipment, and facilitate — and develop within India — an R&D hub for tropical diseases.

The fact remains that at primary healthcare levels, general practitioners are the only ones who can provide patient-oriented holistic care. The introduction of a market-based incentive for general practitioners would

restore to them some pride of place in public health policy and programme, and would help deliver on access, availability, affordability and quality of healthcare, at household levels.

The India-US dialogue will also help scale up and expand healthcare packages to integrate screening, prevention, treatment and follow-up, across the delivery, insurance, technology and pharmaceutical sectors of the healthcare industry, through appropriately developed public-private partnerships.

It will also push India to remain vigilant about enforcing its patent laws.

The writer is Senior Advisor, Outline India. She is a former Special Secretary, Ministry of Health

POLITICAL PARTIES

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 5, 2015

Delhi polls: Congress includes 'communal harmony' in its second manifesto

By Ambika Pandit

NEW DELHI: For the first time, [Congress](#) yesterday included 'communal harmony' in its second manifesto to woo the minority vote bank in high density Muslim pockets. The party has committed to make the Waqf Board an elected body to be chosen by the "awaam" on the lines of [Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee](#) which is elected by the Sikh community.

[Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh](#) said, "We will give recognition to the rights of all religious communities in keeping with the Constitution. If the need arises, we will bring necessary legislation to ensure religious harmony."

The assertion on the subject gains relevance since the party has been citing the recent Trilokpuri riots and other incidents of unrest in its pre-poll speeches to point how 15 years of Congress rule were peaceful.

Apart from the promise of a law for the shelter and property rights of slum dwellers, Delhi poll campaign committee chairman [Ajay Maken](#) highlighted the law for street vendors enacted by the [UPA government](#) and assured that it will be implemented.

For the middle class, Congress has offered a model city high on infrastructure but disabled-friendly. Promising to make the city 'beggar-free', it assured their training, livelihood and rehabilitation. To rein in inflation four government-run vegetable shops will be set up in each constituency.

Congress is also wooing government servants who are decisive in segments like New Delhi, Delhi Cantt and RK Puram. The party assured that the retirement age for government officials will stay 60 years.

PIONEER, FEB 3, 2015

BJP promises to make Delhi a world class city

Four days ahead of the Delhi assembly polls, BJP today released a "Vision Document" laying down a road-map to make the national capital a world class city with major focus on development and women security besides promising transparency in governance.

However, the document did not spell out BJP's position on full statehood to the national capital which it had promised in its manifestos for the 2013 assembly polls and past elections.

The Vision Document, which came in place of the manifesto, promises to address shortage of water, ensure round-the-clock power supply, providing houses to slum dwellers and making the administration responsive and people-friendly.

"We will make Delhi a world-class city. We will ensure development of all sections. Women security will be a priority area for us," BJP's Chief Ministerial candidate Kiran Bedi said releasing the document along with host of senior leaders.

Senior leaders Nirmala Sitharaman, Ananth Kumar, Harsh Vardhan, party's Delhi unit Chief Satish Upadhyay were present on the occasion.

On the statehood issue, Sitharaman said it is an important matter for the party and we will discuss it with the stakeholders before taking a final decision.

The party also did not make any specific mention about cutting power tariff which was a major promise by it ahead of assembly polls in 2013. However, the document said BPL and poor families will be provided power at subsidised rate.

In 2013 manifesto, BJP had promised to cut tariff by 30 per cent if it comes to power.

In the vision document, the party promised to scrap the controversial Bus Rapid Corridor in South Delhi.

Bedi said ensuring "utmost transparency" and making police accountable will be BJP's focus area.

"An Expert Advisory Committee on matters of strategic importance will be set up which means the party will not only follow the vision of its leaders but will also rope in experts," she said.

The vision document said BJP government will make compulsory health insurance for all citizens of Delhi.

BJP also said that 15-bed hospitals and ambulances with paramedical staff will be made available at every 5-km in the national capital if it comes to power.

In the Vision Document, BJP also promised to introduce private OPD facilities by government specialists in all government hospitals from 5 PM to 7 PM in the evenings.

The party has also focused on the protection of people belonging to Northeastern states in its Vision Document with a Special Cell to be set up in all police stations along with a special 24-hour helpline.

Besides, to safeguard the students from the Northeast, special guardianships will be arranged with local families for them, the saffron party also promised.

In its Vision Document, BJP also said that if it comes to power, regularisation and development of unauthorised colonies will be done and all facilities, similar to those provided by DDA colonies, will be provided.

"The funds for the lay-out of these colonies will be granted by Delhi government and the flats can be registered with the appropriate authorities," the party promised.

On the water issue, BJP said that water rates will be rationalised and water bills will also be reviewed. Besides, water will be brought from Munak Canal in cooperation with Haryana government.

"Clean, potable water will be made available to every home in the national capital. Rainwater harvesting will be encouraged and government will provide aid for the same.

"To cap wastage of water, the basic structure of the water supply chain will be modernised and check dams will be built on Yamuna River," the party said in the Vision Document.

POPULATION

STATESMAN, FEB 3, 2015

Britain 1st country to allow '3-parent' babies

Britain is set to become the first country in the world to pass a law making it legal for the creation of so-called "three parent" IVF babies after the House of Commons voted overwhelmingly in favour of the controversial technique of mitochondrial donation.

During a 90-minute debate in the House, MPs on both sides spoke passionately in favour of the process of combining the DNA of three people into one embryo in order to allow women carrying mitochondrial disorders to have healthy children. Following the division at the end of the debate, 382 MPs voted in favour of an amendment making the technique legal, with 128 voting against – a majority of 254, which was bigger than expected.

The regulations will have to be passed by House of Lords which is expected to give its approval in two weeks. The law allowing the licensing of mitochondrial donation will then come into effect in October, opening the way for the first licence to be issued later this year and the first birth of a three-parent baby in 2015. "These rules can only be applied to severe mitochondrial diseases. This is not a slippery slope," the Health Minister said. THE independent

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 5, 2015

'Smart' secretariat to house key ministries

Dipak K Dash

The Narendra Modi government has put emphasis on a "smart complex" that can accommodate almost all the key ministries under one roof.

NEW DELHI: The country's largest 'iconic' new secretariat, which is being touted as an "intelligent" complex, spread over about two crore sq meter covered area will come up in the central part of Delhi. While two regions have been shortlisted for this campus, the complex is likely to be built in Lodhi Estate, which would involve demolition of about 1,100 government flats. People living in these houses will be provided alternative accommodation.

[Sources said a blueprint of the project has been prepared and it would come up for discussion at a meeting next week](#) that will be chaired by principal secretary to the Prime Minister. The Narendra Modi government has put emphasis on a "smart complex" that can accommodate almost all the key ministries under one roof. The second area being explored is Sunehri Bagh in Central Delhi.

Sources said that the USP of this proposed office complex would be smart multi-modal transport, full access control, complete monitoring of employees movement and of the visitors and zero waste. The new secretariat, as it was first reported by TOI in November, would have 6-7 towers each having about 40 storeys.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Features for proposed intelligent building complex

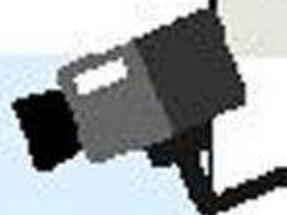
Total covered area
around 2 cr sq ft

6-7 towers each
with about 40 storeys

Fully access-controlled
RFID-based cards
for access



Advanced scanner,
CCTV cameras for
complete monitoring



Connected
with **smart
transportation
network** (Metro
& bus system)

Zero waste,
intelligent
lighting system 

Emergency services and facilities

"The basement of the complex would be used for a Metro station and for other modes of public transport. The employees can directly take lifts from the station to reach their offices. It will be managed through IT applications and facilities. The RFID based cards would be used to enter the complex. This will record entry and exit of everyone in this complex. There would also be CCTVs and scanner for security reasons," said an official, who did not wish to be named.

TOI has learnt that all services within the complex would be monitored completely. For example, the central monitoring cell can find out which committee rooms have been emptied after meetings so that the lights and ACs can be switched from the central office itself. "It would have all smart facilities to qualify as a green building by using renewable energy and recycling waste water," a source said.

Officials also said that this complex will meet the shortage of office space to accommodate major ministries. However, they added that there have been instances where ministries have preferred to keep their old offices in South Block even after complexes have been built with huge government investment and despite ministries occupying these new offices too.

RAILWAYS

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 3, 2015

Now, cash on delivery system for train tickets

You can now book a rail ticket online and get it delivered at home where the payment can be made. Initiating this “cash on delivery (CoD)” system rail ticketing, IRCTC is targeting those customers who are reluctant to use their credit or debit cards as well as those who don’t have net-banking facility.

“One has to just book the ticket online and payments will be made at the time of delivery of tickets,” said a senior IRCTC official involved with the project.

This scheme has been launched on a pilot basis and the service will be available in more than 200 cities initially.

Customers can book a ticket five days prior to commencement of journey.

While Rs 40 will be charged for the delivery of each Sleeper Class ticket, Rs 60 will be charged for an AC class ticket.

Anduril Technologies through their website and their App — BookMyTrain.com — is authorised for providing CoD services.

This is another attempt to move people away from the ticket counters and decongest the booking windows, the official said.

HINDU, FEB 2, 2015

NGT tells Railways to erect wall

After a short train trip from New Delhi railway station revealed piles of waste and encroachment along its property, the Railways is now all set to erect a wall along railway tracks.

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Railways to start erecting the wall wherever there is no encroachment and in the meantime, clear other sites of municipal waste and encroachment.

“The Railways shall start constructing wall of the kind as its technical experts decide at the periphery the land that is in possession of the Railways

as of now except encroachments,” directed a Bench headed by NGT chairperson Swatanter Kumar.

“The area between the wall and the track shall be used as a green area and developed as such,” the Bench said.

It also directed the contractors engaged in cleaning and upkeep to show as to why they not be directed to pay Rs.5 lakh for their failure.

Railways’ counsel Om Prakash told the Bench that on January 23, officials from the Railways Delhi division, representatives from the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, DUSIB, NDMC and DDA travelled on train from New Delhi railway station to Badli via Sadar Bazar, Subzi Mandi, Azadpur, Adarsh Nagar and Badli. The entire journey and the sites were video-graphed and the film was submitted in the NGT.

The Railways said the residents of JJ clusters are responsible for encroachments.

Mr. Prakash said encroachment on railway land and along the tracks is so grave that there are at least 30 run-overs every month.

He said the slum dwellers could be seen sitting on cots spread on the tracks because of which trains have to operate at speed as low as 10 km per hour.

He also said there have been instances of theft in passenger and goods trains and cases where railway crew has been injured and rolling damaged due to stone pelting and other unwanted activities of these dwellers.

Unauthorised slums were constructed on railway land between Sabzimandi and Badli station along the railway track. Similar was the case between Azadpur and Dayabasti and Vivekanandpuri Halt near Sarai Rohilla.

Mr. Prakash said Railways has already given Rs.11.25 crore to MCD for removal and relocation of jhuggies. The money was subsequently transferred to DUSIB.

Following JJ clusters situated on railway safety zones have been prioritised by the Urban Development of GNCTD – JJ cluster Shaheed Sukhdev Nagar, Wazir Pur; Sanjay Camp, Chanakyapuri; JJ cluster railway station, Daya

Basti; Barapullah Nalah Bridge; JJ cluster Wazirpur Railway track and JJ cluster WHO building/ Anna Nagar.

Move aimed to keep tracks free of encroachment and municipal waste

BUSINESS LINE, FEB 2, 2015

Panel wants Railways to halve 'emergency quota' tickets

MAMUNI DAS

Call for rationalisation The committee suggested people booking tickets through emergency quota should be asked to pay higher charges

Train ticket bookings by emergency quota may be halved and get costlier, if the Railway Ministry were to go by the recommendations of committee headed by DK Mittal.

The committee has recommended halving of berths that are allocated by the emergency quota, said an official in the know. It has also said that people booking tickets through emergency quota should be asked to pay higher charges as is applicable on tickets booked through Tatkal route, it is learnt.

However, there was no confirmation about it from the Railway Ministry. While one official told *BusinessLine* that there are strong rumours to lower the tickets booked by emergency quota, another top official said that no such decision has been yet been taken.

Some 60,000 seats are reserved for allocation through emergency quota, though the actual usage varies.

This is not just the committee thought. Recently, Make Railways Better – a group of 75,000 people from an online platform Local Circles – also called for setting up of a transparent system for allocating seats through emergency quota and VIP seat allocation.

The group had said that guidelines need to be issued defining an emergency and a VIP. “Emergency quota should be cut down by 75 per cent to 15,000 seats a day,” Make Railways Better group of Local Circles said.

It had also called for implementation of optimisation system so that VIP routes have more seats. A citizen should be able to call an Emergency Travel

Helpline, upload necessary document and get access to an emergency seat after validation, it said. The citizen group further said that only VIPs and Railway officials should have access to this quota for themselves and for official journeys only.

Families of VIPs and Railways officials could travel based on seat availability but after purchasing the ticket (or book as any other citizen), added Local Circles.

Additionally, it has said that usage of the VIP quota should be limited to a certain number of times and records should be maintained of which VIP is using how many seats and how many times.

Some 60,000 seats are reserved for allocation through emergency quota, though the actual usage varies

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, FEB 5, 2015

Our cities must get fit to get smart

Tel Aviv won the World Smart Cities Award in November 2014 at the Smart City Expo World Congress, hosted in Barcelona, in which 250 cities competed. The city's triumph was attributed to its flagship Digi-Tel Residents' Club and City App projects. These projects are personalised web and mobile communication platforms that provide residents with individually tailored, location-specific information and services. The platform facilitates a direct and holistic connection between the city and residents, from alerting residents to neighbourhood road works or informing them of the nearest bicycle-sharing station to sending targeted reminders for school registration or cultural events and offering discounts which facilitate access to the many cultural events taking place in the city. Digi-Tel encourages residents to proactively engage the municipality as well: residents can locate cultural events and activities as well as report hazards and follow up on their handling. The city also uses social media effectively to increase citizen engagement.

In India too, the dialogue on smart cities has gathered significant momentum over the last several months. The ministry of urban development put together a draft concept note on smart cities that included a set of benchmarks for 14 different functions, ranging from fire-fighting to spatial planning. A good next step would be to ascertain current service levels at least in the 54 metropolitan cities against which their performance can be measured. After all, India's 54 metropolitan cities are the nerve-centres of the economy. They accounted for 28% of India's GDP in FY14 and this number will rise to 32% of GDP by 2025.

But to get smart, cities first need to get fit. They need to fix governance (institutions and policies), finances, planning and capacities to effectively utilise the technologies available to enhance service delivery and e-

governance to improve the quality of life. So, what is required to make cities fit so they can be effectively smart?

Fix institutional defragmentation and undertake agencification: The multiplicity of agencies, their overlapping roles, and rotating civil servants without sufficient accountability are the core institutional issues plaguing the urban renewal and development, especially of metropolitan India. For example about 17 or more agencies are involved in service delivery in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The situation in Delhi is not different. About 11 agencies are involved in running India's capital, ranging from urban local bodies to parastatals and even the government of India. Lack of a systematic coordination and cooperation mechanism between these agencies has fractured the development of cities. A directly-elected metropolitan mayor, singularly accountable to the polity, is what is eventually required. This is clearly a long way off as much political canvassing is required to achieve a Constitutional amendment to this effect. Meanwhile, state governments are yet to implement in spirit the 74th Constitutional Amendment legislated in 1992. This amendment mandates the transfer of the delivery of 18 functions from the state to the city governments. The reluctance of the state governments to concede power to city governments has severely undermined the development and authority of locally-elected representatives. In turn, this has empowered the bureaucracy that is directly controlled by the state government, squarely making state officials supreme in the administration of cities.

However, there exists as interim solution to undo this Gordian knot. Forward-looking state governments have the opportunity to implement the 74th Constitutional Amendment and create a well-functioning metropolitan planning committee for which the secretariat is the metropolitan development authority, chaired perhaps by the chief minister or the minister for urban development and housing. The metropolitan commissioner, in turn, can directly oversee the functioning of urban local bodies, in tandem with their respective municipal commissioners, to ensure systematic provision of basic services, transport, and delivery from parastatals.

Seamless integration between various bodies would dramatically improve the governance of cities and, in turn, the quality of life for all citizens, especially the underprivileged, who are most afflicted by such defragmentation. Further, agencification (providing greater autonomy) of various service-providers as proposed by the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission is required to improve the performance of these agencies.

Implementing this structure calls for amending a series of state and municipal laws, all of which are within the jurisdiction of the state government. But it is really political resolve that is needed to override the machinations of party politics and inter-party politics to move in this direction. Do our chief ministers and their respective cabinets have it?

Make long-term planning a reality: India's planning norms and processes have been the subject of debate ever since urbanisation became a mainstream topic in India. The creation of city development plans (CDPs), undertaken as part of the JNNURM, revealed the inherent weaknesses of the planning process and capacities in India. Yet, it did set in motion an immensely useful process across the country. Many CDPs were developed for a 20-year period, but rarely did they think about the future in the true sense. The capacities they envisioned were at best those to meet historic demand, and often they were supported by insufficient data.

To ensure that a city has sufficient land to cater to population growth and economic activity—not just at present—but in the future as well requires careful planning as experiences of cities like Singapore, New York, London, Bilbao, and Copenhagen suggest. Singapore, for instance prepares a concept plan—a strategic land-use and transportation plan that sets out the direction for the next 40 -50 years and takes into consideration all projected land use demands for housing, industry and commerce, recreation, nature, transport and utility, infrastructure and defense requirements, based on robust future estimates. These plans are based on rigorous econometric forecasts, a thorough understanding of the city's competitiveness to attract new industries and commerce, and they bring together various agencies as they are developed. This exercise is premised on five simple principles: 1) think long-term; 2) fight productively; 3) have some flexibility; 4) execute

effectively; and 5) innovate systematically. This concept plan is then used to systematically create the development plans for local areas so there is a single coherent vision for the city–state. India’s metropolitan cities need to move in this direction with clear demarcation of land-use and boundary expansions to avoid illegal developments on the fringes and curtail opaque and arbitrary changes to land-use.

In India, the MMR is the only metropolis to have such a plan since 2012-13, but it is yet to be adopted by the state government. Why? Because while the Maharashtra Regional Town Planning Act has been amended, the Metropolitan Planning Committee required to present this plan to the state Cabinet for adoption is in the process of being reconstituted. So we have a situation where a city has a concept plan, but because of its weakness in governance, this plan is yet to be adopted and made binding on urban local bodies. Meanwhile, the city’s various urban local bodies have proceeded with drafting their respective development plans without any formal linkages with the concept plan, other than some dialogues. This demonstrates the tight linkage between governance and planning and how a weakness in one impacts the other.

Bolster municipal finances: Numbers running into hundreds of billions of dollars have been tossed around in an attempt to quantify the investment required to finance the sustainable development of cities. But is such quantification sufficient? As time has shown, clearly not. An example is the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, wherein populist policies are once again at work undermining the relevance of user-charges. Water, wifi and housing are being tossed around as freebies to charm voters yet again. Such promises simply demonstrate the lack of pragmatism in India politics, as politics overtakes economics instead of a tango between the two. The consequence? Flailing municipal finances. The same is the case with property taxes. Most cities follow the area-based system of taxation versus a capital-value-based system, significantly lowering their accruals. These taxes are further punctured by deflated ready-reckoner prices used to levy

stamp duties and development charges, and assess property taxes, in turn, distorting municipal finances.

Another underexploited resource is land. The government of India alone, through its various ministries, owns tens of thousands of hectares of unutilised and vacant lands across the country. So is the case with several individuals and organisations in the private sector. Taxing such lands can be prove to be a significant deterrent to hoarding, essential to bring down abnormally high land prices. Three other land-based instruments can significantly help improve municipal finances as global experiences suggest: 1) impact fees on new developments on a per square foot basis to part finance the development of trunk infrastructure, 2) betterment charges levied on properties receiving a significant boost in value due to development of transport infrastructure; and 3) land-use charges based on expected gains from land productivity. Buoyant finances can then be levered to raise funds through bonds and other instruments to finance the development of urban infrastructure.

Build capacity at scale: The single-biggest challenge facing India's urban renewal and development is the lack of skilled manpower required to systematically drive this change in the nation's makeup. For example, a January 2014 assessment shows that Odisha requires about 7,150 municipal staff compared to 1,550 today working across eight functional areas—administrative service, revenue and finance, engineering services, public health and habitat service, community development, e-governance, town planning and transport, and municipal subordinate ministerial service.

Multiple reviews of JNNURM stated that the lack of talent led to delays in creating bankable projects, and resulted in significant cost and time overruns. A further reaffirmation of the capacity deficit was highlighted in the CAG report tabled in Parliament in November 2012; it stated, "Capacity building in terms of finance and human resources maybe enhanced so states may achieve pending reforms." In short, the absence of a professional and qualified municipal cadre is a core resource vacuum in our cities.

Discussions to reorient existing institutions that train government officials, e.g., the Regional Centres for Urban and Environmental Studies, Indian Institute of Public Administration, State Administrative Training Institutes, and the National Institute of Urban Affairs has been underway for the past several years.

Globally, universities have dedicated departments and impart degree programmes on various urban streams ranging from finance to economics to sustainable urban development to innovation through units like MIT's City Labs. A majority of Indian institutions are yet to introduce such courses in their curriculum or move in this direction.

To further underscore this challenge, here is a telling example. An assessment by the Indian Urban Space Foundation stated that India requires about 40,000 urban planners compared to the 3,000 or so registered with the Institute of Town Planners, India. When compared to countries with smaller urban populations, this number further pales. For example, the US has an urban population of 262 million and graduates 2,000 planners annually while India, with an urban population of over 380 million, graduates a mere 400. The CEPT in Gujarat alone graduates about 60% of these planners.

Such acute institutional vacuum is what forms the real bottleneck in India. If we don't have the talent, who will design and implement city plans? Even if cities did import and empanel talent to develop plans, they would have to be administered by city officials who often lack the technical know-how. Equally, locally-elected representatives need to be sensitised to urban issues so they can support the development of appropriate plans and policies to facilitate smart and inclusive development. They need to be trained and exposed expeditiously and at scale. Such a bottom-up push is vital to help support the top-down push made to fix urban governance, finances, and planning. Because ultimately policies and plans, be it governance, financial, or concept and development plans are as good as their implementation. Inaction will result in a crash landing.

Building a strong world-class institution that is tasked with building capacity at scale, can work with various tiers of government and help reorient existing institutions is one way to help correct this glaring capacity deficit. Such an institution must bring together stakeholders from the public, and private sectors, civil society, experts, and academicians all of whom partake in urban renewal and development. Such a multi-stakeholder alliance will help bring to the table the best know-how from each constituency.

In summary, our cities need to get fit to be effectively smart, and, in turn, improve the quality of life for urban dwellers. As the guidelines for smart cities are being developed, there is immense merit in paying attention to these structural issues. Because after all making big changes happen requires undertaking bold actions. Perhaps merging the next-generation urban development mission with the smart cities program could be one way to move in this direction.