

## CIVIL AVIATION

TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 10, 2014

**Foreign aircraft flying into India to face safety checks**

[Saurabh Sinha](#),

NEW DELHI: Foreign charter aircraft flying into India will now be subject to intense safety checks by aviation authorities here.

In a seemingly retaliatory move, the directorate general of civil aviation (DGCA) — which was recently downgraded by US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mainly due to lack of adequate oversight capability — has formed two special teams to subject foreign aircraft to checks on Indian soil. Now based on faults found in them, aircraft can be flagged off in three categories — minor, rectify within a month or serious. In extreme cases, foreign aircraft could even be refused permission to fly on the ground of being unsafe and be allowed to take off only when fully repaired.

The FAA downgrade has meant that Indian aircraft can now be stopped for extensive checks abroad and foreign aviation regulators can ask to conduct their own safety assessment of the DGCA, something which the Japanese and the European Aviation Safety Authority wanted to do last year. After the downgrade, Singapore has already warned that it will put Indian aircraft flying there under strict ramp checks.

"The two teams formed by [DGCA chief Prabhat Kumar](#) will do safety assessment of foreign airlines (SAFA) at Indian airports. While there will be strict monitoring of all airlines, foreign charter planes are suspected to flouting safety norms and they will be under the scanner. This is not a reactionary move to the threat of our planes being held up for checks abroad after the downgrade. Our checks will be intense and sustainable," said a senior official. Sources say western carriers will be in for strict checks as singling out US airlines would be seen as a retaliatory move.

The FAA had first come for an audit of the DGCA in March 2009 and found that India did not have any checks on foreign aircraft flying into the country. Election commissioner Nasim Zaidi, who was DGCA chief then, started safety oversight of foreign airlines ( [SOFA](#)) based on Europe's SAFA. But DGCA could not continue this program for long and has now decided to revive it now.

While India may "return the fire", the biggest worry haunting aviation authorities here is of an Indian registered aircraft showing poorly in checks abroad. The DGCA has issued an advisory to all Indian airlines and charter operators to have all aircraft and crew documents in proper order. Some airlines like Air India have set up special committees for this task.

The downgrade has taken India by surprise. While the DGCA has over years become a completely toothless body thanks to a crippling shortage of flight operations inspectors and other technical staff, Indian carriers have placed orders worth millions of dollars with US major Boeing. Indian authorities felt this "commercial interest" will prevent US from taking the 'extreme' step of downgrading DGCA.

"Given all the troubles American Boeing's Dreamliners are giving Air India on a daily basis, we expected them to be a bit apologetic about their latest showpiece — the B-787. Yet they downgrade us and the aviation ministry still remains helpless in taking up the issue of Dreamliner troubles with Boeing adequately. Boeing is yet to rectify the problems with its new plane and the ministry brass is mysteriously silent. In fact, Boeing spokespersons and our top officials sound alike when it comes to addressing Dreamliner issues," said a senior pilot.

## CIVIL SERVICE

### **TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 13, 2014**

Top babu claims Chidambaram humiliated him over 'poor' English

[Dipak Kumar Dash](#),

NEW DELHI: [Urban development secretary](#) Sudhir Krishna has lodged a compliant against [finance minister P Chidambaram](#) for humiliating him at a high level meeting last Thursday.

In a letter addressed to urban development minister [Kamal Nath](#) on the same day, Krishna said the incident took place at a meeting called to discuss release of additional central assistance for Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. The projects which were approved are awaiting release of funds by the finance ministry.

Krishna, who hails from Uttar Pradesh and is a Karnataka cadre officer, has requested Nath to "bring this matter to the notice of the Prime Minister for appropriate action".

"As I was trying to explain my point, Hon. Chidambaram suddenly started saying that he could not understand my English and that I should speak in Hindi, which his officers would translate for him in English," Krishna wrote to Nath.

"He (Chidambaram) repeated the same statement over and over, in a tone and tenor that was expressly humiliating," the letter said. What seems to have added to Krishna's feeling of hurt was that the meeting was also attended by the expenditure secretary and other officials from finance and UD ministries.

Krishna's colleagues were intrigued by the development, saying they never had any problems with Krishna's English. "He may not have [Oxford](#) English but is proficient," someone who knows him well said.

It is understood that soon after the meeting, a hurt Krishna complained to senior finance ministry officials that he felt insulted.

Krishna was unavailable for comment.

### **ASIAN AGE, FEB 13, 2014**

#### **Central govt workers go on 2-day strike**

After a two-day strike by 10 lakh public sector bank employees, it's now the turn of about 10 lakh central government employees (CGE) who will go on a strike from Wednesday for two days.

The striking employees will include two lakh from Mumbai and Maharashtra working in various government departments. The strike will commence from February 11 midnight. Employees working in railway and defence organisations are also taking part in the strike. Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers held a meeting on February 10 at Mumbai and decided to embark on a strike to press their demands.

The demands of the CGEs are to withdraw the new contributory pension scheme and the re-introduction of the statutory defined benefit pension scheme for all government employees and dispensing with the contract/casual system of employment in government service. They are also demanding the merger of dearness allowance (DA) with pay, grant of interim relief and to hold negotiations and settle the terms of reference for the 7th Central Pay Commission.

Ashok B. Salunkhe, president of the Income Tax Employees Federation said, “Over the eight-year period since the last wage revision, the prices of all essential commodities have soared by almost three times. Compared to the rate of inflation, the dearness compensation had been meagre and the government refused to revise wages even though it permitted such wage revision for government employees every five years.” He further added, “The Confederation and its affiliated federations are certain that the response to the strike will be overwhelming and the government work will come to a virtual halt for two days.”

PIONEER, FEB 12, 2014

### **GOVT OFFICIALS SHOULD BE JUST A CALL AWAY AT ALL TIMES'**

Apparently burdened with workload, several officials of the Delhi Government have been ignoring phone calls from their superiors these days. Taking exception of the practice of keeping their mobile phones off after officer hours and on weekends, the Government has asked its officials not to remain out of reach. While underlining their habit, a circular issued by the Delhi Chief Secretary SK Srivastava recently said that lack of communication had been hampering disposal of important work.

“Government officials are frequently required to be contacted after office hours for urgent work. It has been found that sometimes their mobile phones are either switched off or the officials do not receive calls. Lack of communication in such emergent circumstances impedes disposal of important work,” said the circular, which was sent to all principal secretaries, secretaries and head of departments (HoDs) of the Government.

The Chief Secretary has further advised the officials saying that in case they fail to attend the calls from office due to inescapable situations, should call back immediately. “All officials are advised to keep their mobile phones switched on to facilitate urgent communication and to pick up calls forthwith, unless prevented by unavoidable circumstances. Even in such unavoidable circumstances, all officials should call back at the earliest to facilitate time bound disposal of work,” the circular read. Meanwhile, all senior officials and HoDs have been asked to prepare a roadmap to bring transformation to improve performance of each department and time bound delivery of

services. The Chief Secretary has asked them to submit their plans by the end of this month.

“Efficient service delivery is one of the prime objectives of any Government. With the passage of time, administrative processes can become misaligned vis-à-vis Government objectives. The problem faced by people can relate to long queues, tedious procedures, quality related issues, lack of transparency and corruption etc. This requires radical redesign of government process to improve performance,” said a separate circular issued by the Chief Secretary last week. While suggesting a few measures to prepare a plan, the CS said each department or agency should list out services being delivered and should prioritised those services which are critical or of high volumes.

TRIBUNE, FEB 12, 2014

### **DASS cadre employees protest outside CM office**

Scores of employees of Delhi Secretariat today sat on dharna outside Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's office, demanding filling of vacant posts of Delhi Administrative Subordinate Services (DASS) cadre.

Raising slogans, the protesters also demanded that the pay structure for DASS Cadre employees should be at par Central Secretariat services.

The agitators under the banner of Government of NCT Employees' Welfare Association also demanded cashless facility to Delhi Government Employees Health Scheme holders and 5 per cent reservation for the children of DASS employees in educational institutes of the Delhi government.

They also demanded accommodation for all those employees who have worked for 15 years.

Earlier, the association held demonstrations in September last year in front of the Secretariat in support of their demands.

"The DASS Cadre and Steno Cadre employees of the Delhi government have been continuously putting their problems and demands to the government," said Deepak Bhardwaj, general secretary of the Government of NCT Employees Association.

"The government at that time accepted that our demands are genuine and assured that needful will be done. On this assurance the agitation was postponed. But unfortunately, nothing has done yet," said Bhardwaj.

"The government changed. The association submitted the demands to the new government. But the result is same," he said.

TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 8, 2014

**Raise age of retirement to 65: House panel**  
**Subodh Ghildiyal**

NEW DELHI: A parliamentary panel has urged the Centre to raise the retirement age to 65 years, noting that growing lifespan was adding to the need for "productive ageing".

The recommendation for increase in retirement age comes with a reminder that senior citizens would form 12.4% of the total population in 2026 from 7.5% in 2001.

"The committee feels that with the increase in life expectancy and relatively better state of health of people, the government needs to look at continuity of employment up to 65 years," said the report of standing committee of Parliament on social justice and empowerment tabled on Friday.

It also recommended that government look at greater post-retirement opportunities for senior citizens and create greater financial support for the elderly by hiking the old age pension to Rs 1,000 per month from the present Rs 200 for those above 60 years and Rs 500 for those above 80 years.

While suggesting immediate redressal for the ageing population, the panel sought to train the government's focus on the 60-plus group by pointing out that its growing numbers would be a serious challenge in health and social care.

Specifically, it underlined that as per population projections, the 80-plus bloc, the most-vulnerable group, would see a sharper rise in numbers.

The urgency of parliamentarians towards senior citizens comes amid growing global realization that increasing lifespan is creating a new demographic bloc requiring state intervention.

Seeking government attention, the committee noted that senior citizens comprised 7.5% of the total population in 2001 but their share is likely to increase to 12.4% in 2026. Importantly, UN projections say while India's population will rise by 55% by 2050, that of 60-plus would increase by 326% and that of 80-plus would go up by 700%.

Given the rising challenge, the panel headed by Hemanand Biswal found the government response inadequate, noting that "issue of rapid population ageing in the country has not received due attention of the government and the community at large".

The panel said special focus should be on the octogenarian bloc. "This age group is the most vulnerable and runs the risk of getting dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson disease, depression in their older years," it said, and asked the Centre to constitute an expert group of relevant government departments to devise specialized healthcare programme for them.

HINDU, FEB 11, 2014

## **Two more attempts at cracking UPSC exam**

VIJETHA S.N

Civil service aspirants will soon get two additional attempts at cracking the UPSC examination along with a relaxation in the upper age limit.

“The Central government has approved two additional attempts to all categories of candidates with effect from Civil Services Examination 2014, with consequential age relaxation of maximum age for all categories of candidates, if required,” a statement by the Department of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions said.

As per the existing rules, a general category candidate is permitted a maximum of four attempts. The maximum age limit for such candidates is 30.

There is no restriction on number of attempts by candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs).

As for aspirants belonging to Other Backward Classes, seven attempts are permissible, according to a notification issued for Civil Services Examinations, 2013.

The relaxation comes after months of protests, dharnas and knocking at the doors of politicians by the students.

“We last protested on January 30, which was our 10th protest in the city. We met Rahul Gandhi on that day and he assured us that this would come about,” said Vikas Kumar, who will now be getting two additional chances to crack the exam.

“The last time in the 1970s when the changes were incorporated, there was an increase in the number of attempts as well as an increase in the age limit. There is very short notice, we usually spend years preparing for an exam and the notice of two months was simply not enough,” said Sunil Kumar, another aspirant who now has two more attempts to crack the exams. The exact age relaxation, however, has not been clarified, which has some students worried. “This is very worrying and it has stopped us from feeling truly relaxed.”

The aspirants had demanded an increase in the age limit and additional attempts so that those disadvantaged by the changes could catch up.

## EDUCATION

TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 12, 2013

### Teachers' body slam Delhi University's stand on governing body nominees

Delhi University teachers' body has criticized the university registrar's letter to Manish Sisodia on appointing government nominees in governing bodies of colleges fully funded by the Delhi government.

NEW DELHI: Delhi University Teachers' Association has criticized the university registrar's letter to [education minister Manish Sisodia](#) on appointing [government nominees in governing bodies](#) of colleges fully funded by the Delhi government, saying the arguments lack credibility and are open to manipulation.

Delhi University (DU) has so far not complied with the government order to set up 15-member governing bodies for appointment of assistant professors in the 12 government-funded colleges. Instead, the university, which nominates five members to the governing body (GB), conveyed to Sisodia last week that one-third of members form the quorum. This means that just five members are sufficient to make appointments. An angry Sisodia retorted by saying that the government could stop the Rs 128 crore funding, if the vice-chancellor feels that its involvement is not required.

Expressing concern over the development, DUTA said the letter expresses a disregard for the statutory processes of the university. "The clause 4(9) of the DU Act provides the power to admit to its privilege colleges and that vide clause 28(h) of the Act the conditions for the admittance of a college is to be laid out under the statutes. The statutes can only be made, amended and repealed by the Executive Council."

Slamming recruitment process underway, DUTA president Nandita Narain said: "The quorum requirement of a selection committee is less than the number of members it is supposed to have. Should one then only inform those who are required for fulfilling the quorum?"

"Moreover, the non-regular constitution of governing bodies means that the chairperson of a selection committee could be a person other than the chairperson of a regularly constituted governing body. In the present truncated governing bodies, the chairpersons are university nominees. These facts undermine the credibility of the selection process. More so, when the composition of the selection committees are at variance with the UGC and empower the VC to choose all subject experts."

A college governing body comprise of 15 members, five nominated by the VC, five by the education minister and the remaining drawn from a pool of university teachers. The university has not appointed any assistant professor in the past six years and the [Delhi](#)

[government](#) has not had any nominated member on the governing body since the past five years.

TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 13, 2014

### **Now, unique ID numbers for ICSE students**

[Kamini Mathai](#)

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CICSE) has introduced unique identification (UID) numbers for Class 10 and 12 students.

CHENNAI: After facing issues last year, ranging from wrong questions papers being handed to students to a hacker mining marks data, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CICSE) has introduced unique identification (UID) numbers for Class 10 and 12 students.

This is aimed at speeding up evaluation and ensuring confidentiality. CISCE chief executive Gerry Arathoon said UIDs are random numbers with no bearing on the students' centres or roll numbers. "The numbers are in no particular order and are unique to the student. This means no one else will be able to access their marks from the council website. The examiner will not know the identity of the student or the school," he said.

Shobana R, a teacher from an ICSE-affiliated school in Chennai, said the increased anonymity provided by the UID is a welcome move. "Every year, we get parents who tell us that they know their children's ranks and say they checked other children's marks through their roll numbers. This was relatively easy to do because the numbers were in sequential order and bore details like the centre's name," said Shobana. "Parents of students who did not fare well were a little upset by what was going on."

"The seven-digit UID will remain with the student for life, even if they want duplicates of their marksheets or change their names and want marksheets re-issued in their new names," said Narendra Kumar, director of Orion India Systems, which has been hired by CISCE for the process. "The UIDs are also an attempt to speed up evaluation and re-evaluation processes. Now there are 650 evaluation centres and so re-evaluation takes 20-25 days. We hope to reduce it to less than a day," he said.

Arathoon said the council has also sent out instructional videos to schools on the dos and don'ts for the entire examination process. "We do not want a repeat of what happened the last time, when a wrong question paper was handed out to Class 12 students in Lucknow. We have circulated a CD to supervising examiners at the 2000-odd schools affiliated to the council. The CD, complete with live visuals, explains how supervisors should collect question papers, deposit it in the principal's cupboard, how students need to fill in the forms and how to pack the answer scripts," said Arathoon.

The board's Class 12 ISC exams are due to begin in a couple of days while the Class

10 [ICSE](#) exams will begin in March. Around 70,000 students will appear for the ISC exam and 1,50,000 for the ICSE exam.

HINDU, FEB 13, 2014

### **JNU to delink B.A.–M.A. combine**

VIJETHA S.N

Jawaharlal Nehru University, probably the only one in the city to offer an undergraduate and postgraduate combine in its School of Languages, released its prospectus this year, stating that the combine would no longer be available. The students' union, which alleged that the decision was taken on the sly and to slowly obliterate the programme, is threatening to carry out a large-scale agitation for reversion of the programme.

“The first few prints of the prospectus say that the B.A. and M.A. combine will no longer be available from this year onwards. The actual decision to delink the programme was taken in 2011 at an Academic Council meeting when the union was not functioning (students' union was banned in the university for about four years),” said JNUSU president Akbar Chawdhary, adding that a student referendum had been carried out where 80 per cent of the students said they didn't want the programme to be delinked.

“There is an entrance to get into the B.A. course and the course even accepts admission into its second year, but with an entrance exam. Then, for students who have a B.A. from elsewhere and want to join the programme at the M.A. level, there is another exam. So we already have three entry points for the course. Now, they want to delink the programme and make students who have already taken the entrance exam for the course to enter the M.A. programme. The reasoning given by the administration is that they only want to encourage “serious” students to take this course. By making the students take another entrance and by lowering the chances of B.A. students from JNU taking the course, the administration is making enrolments to go down, which is bad for a public-funded institution,” said Akbar, adding that there was no plausible explanation for such a step.

“We later met the Vice-Chancellor and he even agreed with us and we got to know that members in the Academic Council also agreed with our reasoning. The AC sent it back to the Board of Studies and the next thing we know is this printed prospectus announcing the delinking,” he added.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, FEB 8, 2014

### **India's educational awakening**

In recent times a few leaders, notably the ex-President APJ Abdul Kalam and current President Pranab Mukherjee, have laid stress on improving quality of education and research in India. Kalam, in his interaction with students across the country, emphasised the point that India needs to engage in quality education and research at various levels.

Mukherjee also highlighted upon the dire need of improvement in quality of education and research in higher education institutions. The major concern Mukherjee expressed about is India's failure in creating world-class institutions. Keeping in view the fact that the government has established IITs, IIMs, NITs and central universities, and has made available substantial funding for research, Kalam's and Mukherjee's concerns raise several questions. The most important is what fails Indian institutions improve their quality and ranking, especially in terms of quality research output. The answer could be the lack of scope for creativity and innovation in our education system.

Unfortunately, India does not have many quality institutions to offer undergraduate education. Then there are a limited numbers of career paths unlike in developed countries. The students graduating from schools have the aim of enrolling themselves in those limited number of institutions offering professional degrees, primarily in medicine and engineering. They are under tremendous parental and social pressure to join these institutions in the country and that too in a few selected disciplines where placement is more or less assured of. For example, to get admission in an institution like BITS Pilani, almost 1.5 lakh students register to compete for a few thousand seats every year. Getting admission into IITs is equally competitive. The students need to work very hard, forgetting about any other activities during the last two years of their schooling.

Once they are selected for admission, it is almost like achieving the goal in life and many of them lose motivation. This is further aggravated as many of them do not know how to handle freedom in the hostel life, away from the watchful eyes of their parents and also knowing that the placement cell of the institute would take care to arrange a good job for them at the end of their studies. In a number of cases, due to parental pressures, they target to get admission in a branch that will fetch them a fat salary at the end of their study. However, due to their rankings in the admission tests, they get admission in some other branch, which de-motivates them.

There is another category of students whose expectations about the institutes become very high due to the hype created by the media and the society at large, but after joining they find that the quality of infrastructure is ordinary and the academic system not challenging enough—again de-motivating them.

The situation is further aggravated as the quality of teaching at all levels (elementary, secondary and tertiary) has not improved over the years. The existing teaching-learning process at the undergraduate level is not up to the mark. We still follow the age-old techniques of teaching, have failed to understand the impact of technology on young minds and have not reoriented our teaching methodology to attract them towards the

subjects. We are not growing inquisitive minds. Encouragement to independent thinking, which contributes in innovation and research, is missing. The undergraduate education does not prepare students to get attracted to choose research as a career option. Many students, who are genuinely interested in research, do not think that proper environment is available in Indian universities and go abroad.

For any academic institution to go up on the ranking scale requires to be research-focused and for that it needs to have a large supply of quality research scholars at PhD level. In the absence of sufficient number of genuinely interested and motivated research scholars, the universities are unable to produce excellent research outputs. Moreover, since in most Indian institutions research has been linked to career growth, people tend to prefer easy-going researches which require lesser creativity. There are a few social-related reasons for not being able to attract students towards research.

Hence, if the Indian institutions aspire to produce high quality research and also to enter into the list of the best in the world, serious efforts have to be made at various levels. Starting from school education, the course curriculum needs to be redesigned so as to create inquisitiveness in the mind of the students, which will only happen if research component is introduced at the elementary levels. This is a long drawn process. To improve the supply of good quality students for research, undergraduate education has to be strengthened. The social mindset will only change if the PhD scholars are compensated well and their efforts are adequately recognised.

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 8, 2014

**AAP's new front: Battle with DU over college bodies**

Written by [Ruhi Bhasin](#) , [Aditi Vatsa](#)

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SUMMARY

Minister sisodia Threatens to withdraw funding to colleges if AAP nominees are not included

After the controversy surrounding 90 per cent reservation for Delhi residents in government-funded colleges in the capital, Education Minister Manish Sisodia and Delhi University have locked horns on the constitution of governing bodies in colleges and selection of teachers.

While DU has claimed that it has the required number of members to hold governing body meetings, Sisodia has red-flagged the move as governing bodies at present do not include nominees of the AAP government.

“I had asked the DU Vice-Chancellor to send me his list of probable nominees for the selection committee. They wrote back, saying they have the required quorum to hold meetings. I already have a list of 250 names to nominate to governing bodies. These are qualified people whom we want for the job,” Sisodia said.

DU said governing bodies could meet if one-third of the members were present. The governing body of each college has 15 members. A senior DU official said, “Of the 15, the government nominates five members. Five more are selected by the government from a list given by the V-C. The college principal, two representatives from DU and two from the college make up the remaining five. The university ordinance states that one third members of the governing body shall form the quorum.”

Irrked by this, Sisodia questioned why the government should continue funding these colleges in such a scenario. “If government participation is not needed in this process, why should we provide them funds?” Sisodia said.

There are 12 colleges in DU, which are fully funded by the Delhi government, while 16 others are partially funded by it.

The AAP government had taken out advertisements last month, asking people in the education field to send their applications for the job as they wanted to “replace political members of the previous government with people who are qualified”.

Appointment of teachers in DU takes place on the recommendations of a selection committee constituted by college governing bodies.

According to a section of Ordinance XVIII, the selection committee for appointment of teachers shall be constituted on the following lines — chairperson of the governing body or her nominee, college principal, two nominees of the Vice-Chancellor (one of them should be a subject expert), two subject experts not associated with the college, but nominated by the governing body chairperson and a senior teacher. The quorum of the meeting should be five, of which at least two must be subject experts, the ordinance says.

Teachers at DU also came down heavily on Sisodia’s letter to the university administration, alleging that the AAP government was engaging in “arm-twisting tactics” to get a hold in the university.

“This letter is a repeated attack on the autonomy of the university. More than 4,000 teachers are waiting for their permanent interviews and the process has already been initiated. This is in the last leg of fixing the dates for various subjects. Withholding the interviews will further delay the appointment process,” Rajesh Jha, who teaches political science at Rajdhani College, said.

## ELECTIONS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 10, 2014

**Indian government must consider State funding of polls**

[Navin B Chawla](#)

The government must consider State funding of polls. Otherwise, we could soon have a Parliament comprising oligarchies, writes Navin B Chawla. Not long ago, I attended a seminar in Mexico City where over three days, statesmen, academics and electoral officials discussed different aspects of what constituted a real democracy. As the sole representative from the South, I found myself in the midst of informed discussions wherein democracy appeared to be inextricably linked to per capita incomes.

The premise seemed to be that true democracies could exist only where individual freedoms were assured: freedom from the insecurities of hunger, shelter, unemployment, and most importantly, fear. In the discussions that ensued, it was recognised that I represented a country where, in spite of the many problems that we faced, the world's largest election was conducted fairly, transparently and efficiently.

The audience was stunned by the sheer statistics that constitute India's general [elections](#): 716 million voters on the electoral rolls for the 2009 polls and now closer to 760 million. That is more than the population of the Americas, more than Europe, more even than Africa. In 2009 about 59% of 716 million eligible voters cast their ballots in approximately 8,34,000 polling booths, using 1.3 million electoral voting machines.

While the poll process took almost a month to complete, counting of votes took less than a day. To many in the audience, the completion of such a gigantic exercise on time was a matter of amazement.

There were other positives about India that needed to be placed before the statesmen, who had witnessed varying degrees of turbulence in their own countries or in their neighbourhoods. I pointed out that in spite of poverty India had always conducted its [elections](#) regularly. There had always been an orderly transfer of power. The loser had invariably passed on the baton to the winner. The Election Commission (EC) was, and is, seen by the country as a free and fair umpire.

These are no mean achievements, especially if we look into our neighbourhood: India is among a clutch of nations that gained independence from colonial rule at almost the same time. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which was our special history of the freedom struggle under the Mahatma, we had charted a democratic and largely non-violent path.

We benefited immensely from the wisdom of Babasaheb Ambedkar and equally from the statesmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru who presided over the creation and early nurturing of our vital institutions: the judiciary, the EC, the civil services and Parliament. In some of these countries in our neighbourhood and beyond, democracy

has often been a brief interlude in long spells of military rule, or the most difficult of insurgencies.

But let me go back to Mexico City and the per capita income debate. The theme was frequently that where countries faced severe inequalities, where freedom of expression was not guaranteed, where hunger or want of housing and health services manifested itself in malnutrition and misery, how could true democracy co-exist in such a milieu? While my hosts and their neighbours enjoy per capita incomes above \$15,000, India's per capita income is one-tenth of that.

It is also true that many have neither enough food nor adequate shelter nor even potable water to drink. Yet we are the world's largest democracy and conduct polls fairly, enjoy all the freedoms of free speech, have a robust and growing middle class, a strong press and the vitality of a young population.

On our election scene, in spite of our many strengths, we have yet to vanquish 'money and muscle power'. While, the EC of India has successfully put an end to overt forms of violence, as for instance 'booth capturing', 'money power' remains a major destructive force. By nominating an increasing numbers of 'crorepatis' to contest [elections](#) the statutory financial limits are more easily breached.

The data of recent [elections](#) reveal that crorepatis have the edge when it comes to winning [elections](#). The second issue is of criminality that has got interwoven in the electoral matrix leading to almost 30% members with criminal antecedents in the 15th Lok Sabha. Both these issues have spawned other tangential negatives: 'paid news' is one such adverse result.

It is in this context that the recent win by AAP may be viewed. For whether it continues to run the government of Delhi or for how long, is secondary to my principal point, which is that its members were largely elected by spending sums within financial limits. Nor did they need 'muscle power' to connect them to the electorate, because they were in every sense a part of the neighbourhood that they sought to represent.

The raising of statutory limits on electoral spending "to keep up with inflation" is completely out of place, because if actual spending is already vastly more than the permitted limit, then even a 50% increase in statutory expenditure serves no real purpose. A more meaningful panacea must lie either in the major political parties coming together on a common platform to see if they can agree to an acceptable common formula governing electoral spending.

If this fails, the government must consider State funding of [elections](#). There are many models to choose from. Unfortunately, if we fail to seriously deal with this malaise we will eventually witness a Parliament made up of several oligarchies, leaving far behind the aspirations of our freedom struggle and the architecture of our Constitution.

Navin B Chawla is former Chief Election Commissioner

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

STATESMAN, FEB 13, 2014

### **Nehru place, Gaffar market notorious markets for piracy: USA**

Washington, 13 February: The USA has identified Nehru Place and Gaffar Market in New Delhi along with four others in India as “notorious markets” in global piracy and violation of intellectual property rights (IPR).

Manish Market and Lamington Road in Mumbai, and Chenoy Trade Center and Hong Kong Bazar in Hyderabad are the other four “notorious markets” identified by the US Trade Representatives in its report released yesterday.

“Nehru Place continues to be a prominent example of the numerous markets in major cities throughout India that are known for dealing in large volumes of pirated software, pirated optical media containing movies and music, and counterfeit goods,” said report on notorious markets.

“The markets we have identified unfairly take from these American workers, diminishing the value and saleability of their work and threatening their jobs.

And some of the counterfeit goods sold in the identified physical markets, from medicines and personal care products to automotive parts, can even threaten the health and safety of consumers,” US Trade Representatives Mike Froman said.

“The marketplaces identified here warrant the immediate attention of our trading partners,” Mr Froman said.

According to the report, “2013 Out-of-Cycle Review of Notorious Markets” Gaffar Market is rife with counterfeit clothing, shoes, cosmetics, electronics, and other products, most of which are imported into India. Markets such as Manish Market and Lamington Road in Mumbai are semi-organised markets where unauthorised copies of CDs and DVDs (mostly of Hindi movies but also English-language movies) are sold alongside the authorised versions, it said.

“According to reports, shop operators generally are successful at hiding illicit merchandise prior to police raids, and returning it to shelves shortly after a raid. Hyderabad's Chenoy Trade Center (CTC) and Hong Kong Bazar house a large number of shops that sell computer hardware and software,” the report said. “While many shops sell proprietary software under warranty, many smaller shops discretely sell pirated products, including operating system software, electronic office tools, multimedia games, and anti-virus software, as well as DVDs and CDs containing other copyright-infringing content,” the USTR said in its report.

## INTERNET

ASIAN AGE, FEB 13, 2014

### **Free wi-fi in Central Delhi soon**

[Charu Narula](#) |

The New Delhi Municipal Council is planning to make Central Delhi fully wi-fi enabled. The whole area under the council will be equipped with Wi-Fi and everyone will be able to search, download and use Internet for free for up to 15-30 minutes.

However, nominal charges will be applied after that time period. "It will be absolutely for free up to 15-30 minutes. Thereafter, it might be chargeable," NDMC chairperson Jalaj Shrivastava said, adding that free Internet connectivity was available in all the major cities of the world.

The project will be implemented on the lines of a similar project in Bengaluru. The project will use streetlight poles, which will have the energy-saving LED lights. On these poles, CCTV cameras will be installed to make the area secure. Also, these poles would have wi-fi antennas to provide Internet services.

"We are working towards making NDMC a fully Wi-Fi-enabled area. We have finalised the design for common streetlight poles with LED lights, security cameras and Wi-Fi antennas to save costs. The systems would be put up at every nook and corner of the New Delhi Municipal Council area," said Mr Shrivastava as he announced the council's most ambitious project while presenting the annual budget on Wednesday. The council is also planning to introduce a CCTV-based system to monitor the entire public space to assist and improve security for senior citizens, women and children through general vigilance and not just crime or accident control. The council has also sought to reduce the energy consumption up to 2 MW from streetlights through progressive replacement of uneconomical light sources by use of LED and other conservation measures.

The council also signed an MOU with Solar Energy Corporation of India to execute the project. The detail project report in this regard has been prepared by the agency, the highlight of which is the generation of rooftop photovoltaic electricity on all its major buildings like schools, hospitals, markets and offices. The ministry of new and renewable energy under its Solar City Project have nominated this ambitious project of the civic body. The NDMC is expecting to generate almost 8MW of rooftop solar energy within a year through this project.

## JUDICIARY

STATESMAN, FEB 13, 2014

### **Govt drops judge gag bid**

A controversial clause barring judges from making verbal comments against any constitutional authority during open hearings was today dropped by the Cabinet in the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill.

The Cabinet decided to drop this clause against the backdrop of protests by the judiciary and jurists over the issue. The Law Ministry took back the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill to the Union Cabinet to drop the clause.

This is the fourth time the Cabinet will deliberate on the Bill that seeks to provide for accountability of judges.

The last time the bill had gone to the Union Cabinet was in December, 2012 when it had decided to retain the controversial clause with certain amendments. The Bill has already been passed in the Lok Sabha and is pending in Rajya Sabha.

The earlier clause prohibited judges from making “unwarranted comments against conduct of any constitutional or statutory authority or statutory bodies or statutory institutions or any chairperson or member or officer thereof, or on the matters which are pending or likely to arise for judicial determination”. This has now been dropped after the Law Ministry gave its fresh view that retaining it was not practical. The Bill will have to travel back to the Lok Sabha after its passage in the Upper H

## MONEY

BUSINESS LINE, FEB 8, 2014

### **Rs. 10 plastic note to be tried out in five cities**

New Delhi, February 7: Plastic notes in the denomination of Rs. 10 will be introduced on a pilot basis, Minister of State for Finance Namo Narayan Meena told to the Lok Sabha on Friday.

In a written reply to a question, Meena said about 1 billion Rs. 10 plastic notes will be introduced on a trial basis in five cities — Kochi, Mysore, Jaipur, Shimla and Bhubaneswar. The field trial is expected to be launched in the second half of 2014.

On a question on corporate tax dues, Minister of State for Finance JD Seelam informed the Lok Sabha that the Income Tax Department has devised six points strategy to recover corporate tax dues.

As on December 31, 2013, total corporate tax demand outstanding has reached Rs. 2.46 lakh crore. There are 45 corporate cases where direct tax demand above Rs. 500 crore is outstanding.

However, “No separate data of outstanding demand from big corporate as a separate category or class is mentioned.”

He also disclosed that the strategy to recover outstanding tax dues will include strict monitoring and review of actions for recovery of tax demand by jurisdictional income tax authorities, use of information from Individual Transaction Statement as an effective tool of recovery in cases where taxpayers is untraceable or no asset is available for recovery, besides others.

### Income Tax Raid

Seelam also said that in a total of 3,139 searches were conducted by the Income Tax Department. These resulted in seizure of disproportionate assets worth Rs. 565.4 crore. It may be noted that in 2012-13, 3,889 searches related in recovery of assets over Rs. 575 crore.

### Gold, Silver duty

To another question, Seelam said “There is no proposal under consideration to reduce import duty on gold, taking into account the likely impact on the Current Account Deficit.” Last year, the Government hiked import duty thrice to 10 per cent on import of gold in wake of high CAD, which in turn was impacting the value of the rupee.

The Reserve Bank too imposed a series of curbs to restrict gold imports.

The CAD had touched a record high of \$88.2 billion in 2012-13.

However, following a series of measures, by both the RBI and the Government, the deficit is likely to fall below \$45 billion in the current financial year ending March 31. Finance Minister P Chidambaram had recently said the restrictions on gold imports will be reviewed by March-end.

Meanwhile, the Government collected Rs. 7,590 crore by way of import duty on gold during April-December 2013. In 2012-13, the collection was Rs. 10,463 crore.

## PARLIAMENT

STATESMAN, FEB 10, 2014

**Middle class monologue on English in India**

**Arunabha Bagchi**

Mulayam Singh Yadav stirred up a hornet's nest by proclaiming in a recent speech that MPs should be barred from speaking in English in Parliament. The political motive of the shifty leader of the Samajwadi Party at a time of imminent struggle for winning seats in parliament is obvious to all political observers. Nobody in right mind took his remark seriously. Still, the English language media was swift in condemning the statement in no uncertain terms. I asked myself why?

Many articles immediately appeared in different forums on the somewhat different topic of the need for English proficiency for enhancing career perspectives of our youth. No one seriously commented on Mr. Yadav's prescription to ban English in parliamentary debates. Most articles stressed on our vast possibilities in this globalised world with our English-speaking educated middle class. I wondered whether all Indians would become BPO workers, or join multinational corporations with MBA degrees in their pockets? What must have really disturbed our commentators was another sentence in Mr. Yadav's speech: "Countries which use their mother tongue are more developed." Interestingly, he was spot on with this comment. But that was tantamount to treason in the eyes of our media obsessed with the success of our middle class professionals, and this dangerous heresy had to be nipped in the bud. Of course, all articles did include platitudes about the need for our kids to learn the vernacular along with English, and our need to promote native culture. This balancing act, however, lacked credibility and appeared mostly superficial.

The real issues on learning English in India are never well posed and clearly analysed. How much knowledge of English is really necessary for our high school pass outs? Should the emphasis be on expressing oneself in English, have decent writing capability or acquire some knowledge of English literature for basic intellectual development? At what age is it really absolutely necessary for every school student to start learning English? Is it detrimental for students to be overloaded with English at a very early stage of their development in a milieu where all other interactions are in the vernacular language? Or, is it better to force-feed students in English language from childhood despite the absence of any support for the language from the surroundings? And so on.

It is not my purpose to delve into these critical issues. There must be enough experts in India with far more knowledge about them. My only point is that these experts must be consulted before a state government decides on the correct policy on English education in schools. At present the whole issue has become a middle class monologue; an axiom that does not need any proof. Here I want to point out some obvious fallacies of

overemphasizing English in our school curricula, and their possible effects on the learning ability of an average student.

A slight productivity increase of all workers in our country has far greater cumulative impact on our economy than large increase of a few top managers. Neglecting our (below) average students to develop their potential already caused incalculable damage to our economic growth. Due to historical injustices, an awfully large number of (below) average students in our country come from lower castes and minorities. Overemphasizing English is a misplaced priority that makes it even harder for them to catch up, and in addition, increase their inferiority complex vis-à-vis the better off students. The most glaring example of this is stories of isolation felt by many IIT students from depressed communities because of their inability to speak fluent English.

The purpose of high school is to inculcate among the young a sense of curiosity and the development of logically structured thinking. This needs to be complemented by learning to appreciate human expressions in the form of art and literature. None of these needs English per se, and can best be absorbed in one's mother tongue in formative years. For most students with limited mental capacity, being forced to learn them in an alien language invariably lead to cramming. Even a young physics professor in my college days told me that he never really clearly understood Physical Optics, but managed to do well purely by cramming. The damage that cramming has perpetuated in India for generations has been pointed out by experts in numerous articles, but no one dared to point out the root cause of this phenomenon.

The immediate by-product of overemphasis on English is less emphasis on thorough understanding of various subjects that students really need to learn in high school. One immediate casualty is the assimilation of basic scientific ideas. As young minds confront new scientific facts, they need to think about them in their own ways to absorb them. It is a truism that this is best done in the language they are most familiar with. Once one scientific concept remains hazy, problems keep compounding as more related ideas crop up. That few bright students encounter less problem on this score is no argument to blame the difficulty of the vast majority on their "lazy" and "apathetic" attitudes. The loss to the knowledge base of the country as a whole is incalculable.

I am not in any way advocating against learning English for our youth. My only point is that the usual arguments used in its favour are meaningless. However globalized the world becomes, proficiency in English would continue to have marginal impact on our economic prosperity in that environment. A more plausible argument in favour of English is its link language status in the whole country. Instructions on all technical equipment are in English, and it is also the language of communication among Indians of all regions. As businesses become more integrated in India with increasing use of mobile and Internet, a reasonable knowledge of English by our future generation is of great benefit to our economy. But it is far easier to acquire this by our students these days than in the

bygone era. One reason is the rapid spread of television with many English language channels. These must be extensively used, if necessary by means of Internet, to improve listening and speaking abilities of students by integrating appropriate programmes in their school curricula. It would be cheaper and more effective to use them when the students are somewhat grown up.

One intriguing suggestion I came across in this connection is to introduce Latin script for each regional language, and use dual scripts in lessons from primary schools. The advantages of this are legions. Students would learn Latin script from childhood, while maintaining familiarity with the original one. The mental pressure would be minimal and learning English at a later stage would not be any handicap whatsoever. With current state of computer programming, preparing textbooks in both scripts would be trivial. This would result in huge job opportunities to the IT professionals, along with enormous revenue generation for our IT companies, reminiscent of the "y2k millennium bug" boom. It would be a better use of our resources than yet another ID scheme in the name of the Aadhar card. Use of Internet and social networking sites in regional languages would explode, with huge economic benefit. As people of all social milieus are increasingly migrating to other parts of the country, and are somewhat more literate than the previous migrants, they would be able to read the language of their place of settlement as soon as they start conversing a bit with the local people. This would help them pick up the local language quicker. The economic and cultural impact on the country is bound to be electrifying.

Finally let me come back to Mr. Yadav's wish to bar speeches in English in our Parliament. This would make our Parliament look like the European Union Parliament in Brussels (and Luxembourg). Parliamentarians there are allowed to speak in any EU language and there are scores of interpreters translating in all other languages. How about introducing the same system in our country? This is technically feasible. It is going to provide employment to a large number of our unemployed countrymen that specialize in local languages in colleges. This would be better than much wasteful social expenditure in our country.

It would also induce many students to learn other Indian languages. Pride in our local culture and that of other regions would finally blossom, and India would finally merge with Bharat.

The writer is ex-dean and professor of applied mathematics of the University of Twente, The Netherlands.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, FEB 10, 2014

**Column: Parliament's poorest performance**

The first few days of this last session of the 15th Lok Sabha has mirrored its performance over the last five years. This Lok Sabha has the dubious distinction of seeing the highest percentage of time lost to disruptions (over a third of the scheduled time) leading to a decline in work done. This has resulted in the lowest number of bills passed by a full-term parliament (165 till now, compared to 297 and 248 in the previous two). Over a third of these have been passed without much deliberation on the floor of the House. The cost of parliament's inability to perform effectively can be seen in it working below par on three of its key roles: making laws, holding the government to account for its actions, and allocating financial resources of the central government through the budgetary process.

**Making laws**

A few bills with significant impact have been passed, early in the term of this parliament, and in the last one year. In 2009 and 2010, parliament enacted the Right to Education Act, established the Green Tribunal, and passed the Civil Nuclear Liability Act. After a long lull through 2011 and 2012, there was a prioritisation of some bills in 2013. Though just 15 bills (other than appropriation bills and the finance bill) were passed last year, these included the following: a new companies law, amendments to criminal law regarding safety of women, protection for women against sexual harassment at workplaces, land acquisition, food security, the Pension Bill and the Lokpal Bill.

That said, many important bills initiated by the two UPA governments have not been passed. These bills have implications across many sectors. These include bills that aim to restructure the regulatory architecture for higher education, a different one for medical education and the medical professions, a set of anti-corruption and service delivery bills, regulatory changes to ensure quality of seeds and pesticides for farmers, and a set of bills related to the economy and financial markets.

The list of bills related to the economy illustrates the failure to meet the ambitious targets. The Direct Taxes Code Bill was initiated in 2008 (as a draft) with the aim to simplify the tax system. It aimed at removing most exemptions and deductions (as these distort economic decision-making) which would provide the space to reduce the tax rate while remaining revenue neutral. By the time the bill was introduced, several provisions related to withdrawal of exemptions were removed but the bill is yet to be debated. The discussion on the Goods and Services Tax has been going on for years. A bill to amend the Constitution to enable this tax was introduced but the government has not been able to forge a consensus across states and across political parties.

The amendment to the forward contracts regulation act were initiated in 2006, but have not been passed yet. The proposals include making the regulator (FMC) an independent and statutory regulator, and demutualisation and corporatisation of commodity exchanges (and also permitting options and other derivatives), the importance of which is evident after the recent issues in that market. The micro-finance sector is still waiting for clear

regulations and the bill is pending since May 2012. The government has issued and re-issued an ordinance to amend the Sebi Act related to consent orders and search/seizure but has been unable to take this up in parliament.

Higher education and knowledge creation would be important factors in the growth of the Indian economy. Following two high-level committees, a bill was introduced that reforms the sector by removing silos across subject areas, and replacing various education regulators such as the UGC, the AICTE and the bar council with a unified regulator. Other bills provide for dematerialised certificates (to improve authentication), permit foreign universities to operate in India, prohibit capitation fees, set up bodies that would give quality ratings, and have specialised tribunals. All these bills are still awaiting parliamentary approval.

#### Holding the govt to account

A second important role of the legislature is to ensure the accountability of the government for its policies and actions. The case of the 2G spectrum allocations illustrates how parliament has not been able to fulfil this role effectively. In 2005 (two years before the allocations), the parliamentary standing committee on information technology had examined the issue of “spectrum management”. However, it did not give clear recommendations on the methods for allocation. That was a missed opportunity. Then, following the report by the CAG, the matter was taken up by the public accounts committee. That committee was unable to finalise a report. In parallel, after parliament was stalled for a full session, a JPC was formed to examine the issue. The report was adopted by the 30-member committee by a 16-11 vote (3 members were absent). In sum, parliament failed to fulfil its role as a policy oversight body at an early stage and as a fact-finding body at the later stage.

#### The power of the purse

Any government spending requires pre-approval by the legislature. This is done through the budget process via the demands for grants by each ministry and department. Parliament is expected to examine the various demands, and given overall funding constraints, debate the best possible resource allocation. However, in recent years, parliament has often not discussed the demands in detail. For example, in 2013, all the demands for grants were passed without any discussion. There have rarely been years in which the demands of more than 5 ministries were discussed or when over 15% of the demands were discussed before approval. (It must be noted that there is a basic flaw in the process. Money bills are conventionally seen as equivalent to a no-confidence motion. If the government’s budgetary demands are not approved, it is expected to resign. The high stakes mean that there is limited flexibility for parliament to make changes.)

Parliament is designed to discuss and deliberate issues so that a compromise across conflicting interests can be found. This Parliament has been largely ineffective in doing so. The task before the MPs in the next parliament is to rise above partisan considerations and act with statesmanship to find widely acceptable resolutions to difficult issues.

MR Madhavan

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 11, 2014

**Sushil Koirala is new Nepal Prime Minister, says constitution his priority**

Written by [Yubaraj Ghimire](#)

Nepali Congress Chairman Sushil Koirala was on Monday elected Prime Minister of the country – fifth in as many years of political instability.

Koirala, the only candidate who filed his nomination in the Parliament secretariat, secured 405 votes – constituting more than two-third, out of total 553 present.

He was backed by his own party, the Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist and others.

However, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists and the pro-monarchy Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal, and most of the Madhes centric parties voted against Koirala.

In his brief address, Koirala said while having a constitution delivered within a year with good governance would be his government's priority, he will also make every attempt to strengthen Nepal's relations with two immediate neighbours India, China and other members of the international community.

Koirala's election brings to end the rule by government of retired bureaucrats headed by the incumbent chief justice of the Supreme Court that was formed to hold election to the second constituent assembly-cum legislature.

TELEGRAPH, FEB 11, 2014

**WRONG AT THE TOP**

**On idealizing the notion of the people**

PRABHAT PATNAIK

When the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi decided to consult the “people” on whether it should form a government with Congress support, this was generally lauded as a new brand of honest politics, instead of being criticized as exhibiting poverty and indecisiveness of its leadership. Many saw in it an attempt to break with the top-down approach that has characterized the distribution of power in the Indian polity and is supposed to spawn authoritarianism and corruption.

A similar opposition to the top-down approach has often informed arguments in favour of the devolution of resources and power to *panchayats*: they being closer to the people, such devolution is seen as representing a deepening of democracy. Of course, these two instances are different, since the *panchayats* are *elected* bodies under the Constitution, to

whom such devolution must be made, while the people consulted by the AAP in the *mohallas* have no particular *locus standi*. But what is common between these two cases is the invoking of the people to criticize a top-down approach, or, put differently, to pose a dichotomy between the people *as they are* and the centre of power.

This view that the top-down approach should be eschewed and the people, as they are, should be entrusted with decision-making, is based on flawed thinking. It idealizes the people as they are, and sees them as a pure and undifferentiated mass that is entirely a repository of virtue. In fact, however, the people in their empirical state of existence, are neither pure, nor pristine, nor homogeneous, nor free of the web of local-level power relationships. Consulting the people under these circumstances amounts to bowing before these power relationships; apotheosizing the people under these circumstances amounts to glorifying these relationships; and the decentralization of power and resources under these circumstances results not in an elimination of corruption, or even necessarily in a reduction in its level, but rather in a decentralization of corruption.

Some would say that this is still better than the power-at-the-top situation. But even if this position is accepted for argument's sake, it is nevertheless a far cry from clean politics. What is more, in a very crucial sense, it is not even true. The power relationships that exist among the people in their empirical existence, encompass caste oppression, gender oppression, the smothering of individual freedom, and the subversion of the freedom of choice. In short, they are suffused with the legacy of our oppressive caste-based feudal system. There can be no progress towards democracy unless that legacy is eliminated, just as there can be no progress unless a struggle is waged against the constriction of democracy by the operation of neo-liberal capitalism. Empowering the people in their empirical existence, under the illusion that what empirically exists is a homogeneous and pure category, can serve to refurbish these power relationships. It can entail *inter alia* an endorsing of *khap panchayats* and honour killings that constitute a negation of democracy.

In fact, one can go further. Unconstrained empowerment of the people as they are, on the premise that the more they are empowered the better it is for democracy, is not just problematic; it is actually retrograde. Just as Lenin had argued that socialism had to be brought to the proletariat from outside by introducing into its consciousness a theoretical perspective that is not spontaneously generated from within the quotidian struggle of the workers, likewise the idea of democracy has to be brought to the people from outside, whence it follows that this idea reaches the top first before it begins to percolate down. The top, therefore, is likely at any time to be more of a location of democratic ideas and consciousness, within of course an overall democratic polity, than the bottom; weakening the top in the name of combating the top-down approach is likely to weaken the struggle for democracy.

To say this is not to ignore the fact that since education, and hence theory, has historically been confined to an upper-caste elite, privileging the top, amounts to keeping intact the stranglehold of this elite on the social and political life of the country. But the fact of

education also creates among this elite dissonant voices, including voices that speak out for equality; such voices are far more scarce and far less powerful at the bottom.

It follows that a mere mechanical empowering of *panchayats* or *mohalla* committees or what have you, is fraught with danger for democracy. And when these institutions at the bottom are not even elected bodies, when their constitution has not even been popularly mandated through any electoral exercise, the danger is all the greater. Ambedkar, one should recall, had serious misgivings even with regard to the decentralization of power to elected local-level bodies, for he saw the village as the primary location of the oppression of the Dalits. His misgivings were amply justified.

The point of my argument is not to oppose the decentralization of power to the people. But the people in question here must be, not people in their empirical existence, but people in the process of transcending their empirical existence; not people in stasis but people in movement; not people entrapped within local power relationships but people struggling against such relationships; not people filled with the consciousness inherited from the caste-based feudal society, but people in the process of going beyond that consciousness and reaching out *via* theory to a democratic consciousness. Merely bringing about a decentralization of decision-making without at the same time struggling to move people out of their stasis, which also entails bringing theory to them, constitutes not a strengthening but on the contrary an attenuation of democracy.

There is an additional point here. It is not only the legacy of the feudal past that afflicts the people; the capitalist present, too, affects their lives profoundly, and manipulates their consciousness in a myriad ways. Communal riots, for example, as numerous instances from Moradabad to Gujarat show, are engineered as part of a capitalist drive to acquire “for a song” the land and property of the minority community; and to this end, communal ideology is sought to be injected into the consciousness of the people. This further underscores the danger of the unrestrained empowering of the people as they are.

The apotheosis of the people as they are was never part of the thinking of the leaders of the national movement, and nothing illustrates this better than Gandhi’s withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident. Implicit in that withdrawal is the view that the people’s existing consciousness has to be struggled against, even when they happen to be engaged in a movement; that far from idealizing the people in stasis, it is essential to critique them even when they are in movement, if that movement is still circumscribed by a consciousness embedded in the stasis — that is, by a non-theoretical consciousness.

The Left, which has been committed to democratic decentralization, and which has played a stellar role in carrying it forward in states where it has been in power, has never seen it as mere handing over of power to the people as they are. For instance, E.M.S. Namboodiripad’s argument in the context of Kerala had been as follows: since Kerala, which has broken the *jenmi* system and landlords’ power, has also got a plethora of mass organizations of peasants, agricultural labourers, toddy tappers, fishermen and other segments of the poor, going right down to the village level, democratic decentralization

in Kerala was on the agenda for empowering the people. The premise of his argument had been a cognition of the people in movement. It is this fact of their being in movement which would ensure, he believed, that decentralization became not a strengthening of the old or new power relationships, but a strengthening, instead, of the movement of the people.

It may be argued that the very fact of the decentralization of power to the people as they are, can give rise to their movement; decentralization itself can be the start of a new dialectic. But the point is that such a dialectic need not be in the direction of strengthening democracy. And even if it disrupts, rather than strengthening, the pre-existing power relationships, it may give rise to new, alternative power relationships that are no less anti-democratic.

This does not mean that democratic decentralization must wait until the people have begun to move, have become part of a struggle that interrogates anti-democratic consciousness. What it means is that such decentralization, when it occurs, must be hemmed in with safeguards. The proposition that the more power is handed to the people as they are, the better it is for democracy, is wrong.

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STSTESMAN, FEB 13, 2014

### **Mr Modi's economics**

What India needs is a Head of State and not just A head of the corporate world. It is time to forget personalities, to bury egos, and to focus on the best possible agenda for the nation. That is what India desperately requires. It matters little whether Mr Modi or someone else sits in the driver's seat ~ RAJINDER PURI

One should never blindly trust the experts. All their knowledge and expertise might be used for interests inimical to the public good. There is no dearth of financial experts operating in the US. They did not prevent but actually created a global financial meltdown. As one ignorant about the economy, this writer trusts plain common sense more than what all the experts with their esoteric jargon might convey. Often their jargon is intended to obfuscate rather than highlight the truth. These thoughts arise when one considers the electoral prospects of the BJP prime ministerial candidate, Mr Narendra Modi, and the political response he elicits from his rivals.

Mr Modi's campaign is on the crest of a very strong anti-incumbency wave. The Congress is perhaps at its lowest-ever popularity ebb. But Mr Modi's rivals are desperate to somehow block his ascent. Therefore, they latched on to the Gujarat riots of more than a decade ago. That did not wash because no communal trouble had visited Gujarat since then. Then the argument was reinforced by talking of an inclusive economy indicating

thereby that all sections of society should benefit from economic growth. The unspoken hint was that the minorities were being excluded. This encouraged Mr Modi to reach out to the Muslims with various symbolic gestures and promises for the future. This led the Congress to embark upon an economically counterproductive policy of distributing sops to the disadvantaged sections through subsidies and fresh legislation. It resulted only in alienating the big corporate sector that became even more committed to Mr Modi.

In the midst of all this the Aam Admi Party (AAP) emerged. The powers that be created it as the spare stepney wheel to replace the Congress and mop up the anti-incumbency vote that otherwise could go to Mr Modi. A punctured Congress is incapable of exploiting its traditional vote-bank. Unfortunately since the goal of AAP remained as negative as that of the Congress, namely to somehow block Mr Modi's ascent, its policies were targeted only to the polls through wild populism. The approach towards subsidies was not abandoned but reinforced by AAP. Wild populism suggested a move away from stability and not towards it as is sorely sought by the public. Mr Modi's strongest electoral card remains his promise to restore stability to national politics. AAP too therefore is fast deflating in the perception of the elite and corporate segments. It remains to be seen whether like the Congress it too is punctured. It is in this overall context that a fitting response to Mr Modi is needed. What might it be?

The first requirement would be to stop focusing on Mr Modi and start focusing on his agenda. The second requirement would be to stop rubbishing his agenda and start highlighting its shortcomings and offer an alternative approach to overcome them. After all, what the nation requires is the best possible agenda regardless of who is empowered to implement it. Recently Mr Modi outlined his vision of the future and listed the priorities of his agenda. He wants to create 100 new "smart" cities, bring back money stashed in Swiss banks, and start bullet trains to modernize the railways. He has promised to create quality higher educational institutions in every state. In other words his vision approximates to the high growth model obtaining in China and what Prime Minister Mr Manmohan Singh unsuccessfully aspired to accomplish during a tenure hampered by corruption, administrative bottlenecks and the sops enforced by Mrs. Sonia Gandhi's National Advisory Council (NAC). But the intentions and the economic goals of Mr Modi and the UPA government are not different. That is why earlier I had described Mr Modi as a muscular version of Mr Manmohan Singh. I felt emboldened after a Mumbai-based analyst well-versed in economics, Mr Yogi Aggrawal, in a newspaper article endorsed this view by writing: "On the face of it, Mr Modi's economic program seems just a rejig of the current programme of investment for higher growth."

Mr Aggrawal in his commentary has listed Mr Modi's failure to optimise his priorities by over-emphasizing investments in industry to the neglect of agriculture. He has also pointed out that some of his goals, such as installing bullet trains, are not the best option. Being ignorant about the economy this writer would not like to comment on this view.

But it seems to me that the heart of the differences is exemplified by the debate between renowned economists Mr Amartya Sen and Mr Jagdish Bhagwati. Whether fastest growth relying on the trickle-down effect is best for the economy or is there special need to cater to the disadvantaged in order to protect them? Going by a layman's common sense it seems to me that there is only a difference of nuance in the two approaches.

The disadvantaged should not of course be helped mainly through subsidies and sops. These result in creating crutches for the poor without empowering them and liberating them from poverty. However, investment for growth is of two kinds. There is investment for fast growth and quick profits that is sought by the big corporate sector. There is also investment with slower growth and longer gestation period for profit that is of more lasting economic benefit to society.

Consider this example. Investment in universal compulsory primary education would invest in human talent for exploitation in the future. But immediately to implement this policy there would be needed new schools, new teacher training institutes and new quality teachers. By creating this human and resource infrastructure fresh substantial employment would be generated. Consider the employment created by just the mid-day meals! Armed with purchasing power this new class would strengthen demand in the market. The much greater long-term benefits of investing in the most valuable natural resource in the nation, its human talent, would be visible only later.

Although investment in this would have more lasting benefit than several short-term investments for fast growth and quick profits, there would be few takers among businessmen in the big corporate sector. That is why it is up to the government to take the longer view and ensure that the right priorities are maintained. This is one example. Experts could provide better ideas.

Mr Modi undoubtedly has removed all glitches in the way of big corporate investment to ensure fast growth which is why he has become a hot favourite of big business. But now should he not resist corporate pressure to ensure that the pattern of national investment addresses society's long-term interests? Mr Modi's emphasis on fast and high growth should be welcomed. But does it not need fine tuning by altering the direction of national investment towards long-term benefit? What India needs is a Head of State and not just a head of the corporate world. It is time to forget personalities, to bury egos, and to focus on the best possible agenda for the nation. That is what India desperately requires. It matters little whether Mr Modi or someone else sits in the driver's seat.

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HINDU, FEB 8, 2014

**Cabinet clears Telangana Bill  
Hyderabad will not be UT, there is no Rayala Telangana either**

The Union Cabinet on Friday cleared the Bill for creation of Telangana, paving the way for its introduction in Parliament on February 11 or 12.

The key demands of Seemandhra leaders that Hyderabad be made a Union Territory and that Rayala Telangana be created were rejected, putting a question mark on the fate of the Bill in Parliament.

While the Bill as sent by the Andhra Pradesh Assembly would be commended to Parliament for consideration and passage, the government would move 32 official amendments, amplifying some administrative aspects on the bifurcation of the State.

The Bill will be tabled along with a summary of 30-odd pages on the proceedings in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly and Council, and a number of amendments proposed by the State legislators.

With the Cabinet's clearance, UPA managers are now faced with the challenge of getting Congress MPs from Seemandhra on board. As things stand, there is little chance that they will cooperate in its passage. The determination of Seemandhra MPs to stall the move was evident as Parliament was paralysed for the third consecutive day on Friday. A senior Minister told The Hindu, "In effect, no big changes were made to the original Bill. One of the amendments proposed is to include the villages that would be submerged on account of the Polavaram project in Seemandhra."

Three Ministers from Seemandhra made a forceful but vain attempt to plead the case for demarcation of Hyderabad as a Union Territory. The Bill envisages Hyderabad as a common capital of the two proposed States for 10 years.

The demand of the Seemandhra Ministers for inclusion of the districts of Anantapur and Kurnool in Telangana also did not find favour with the Cabinet.

At the meeting, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar is believed to have sought clarifications on how the Governor of Telangana could be vested with law-and-order powers in the territory of the common capital of Hyderabad.

Jairam Ramesh, a key member of the Group of Ministers on Telangana, explained that the government was legally sound on the subject.

The government is keen on pushing the Bill as the ongoing Parliament session, which ends on February 21, is the last chance to get it through. The current Lok Sabha session is the last before the Lok Sabha election due in April-May.

The UPA managers were also holding consultations with the BJP, which has its reservations.

The BJP has been putting the onus of the passage of the Bill on the Congress, which faced serious embarrassment on account of a no-confidence move by six of the party MPs from Seemandhra.

Both the BJP and the Telugu Desam Party support creation of Telangana but have complained that the Bill does not address the concerns of Seemandhra

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 13, 2014

**On first day of tea party, Modi talks good governance**

BJP's prime ministerial nominee and Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday kick-started his much-anticipated 'chai pe charcha' – discussion over tea – addressing and interacting with audience at around 1,000 tea stalls in 300 cities across the country.

The theme of Modi's first 'chai pe charcha' was good governance on which he made the opening remarks for five minutes and then invited questions from the audience present at different venues equipped with huge TV sets or projectors.

Modi himself was present at a tea stall opposite Karnavati club on SG highway in Ahmedabad and from there he interacted with his fans and supporters.

He answered a questions ranging from tackling black money to promoting clean energy, skill development, law and order, government jobs etc. from the audience.

"In our country, a tea stall serves as a means to livelihood for the poorest of the poor and also serves as a 'footpath Parliament'. When I have come here today, I naturally go back to my childhood. I recall I learnt a lot when I was selling tea... it was an experience....," he said in his opening remarks.

"Today we are going to discuss good governance while sipping tea. Mahatma Gandhi gave us 'swaraj' but we couldn't achieve 'suraaj' (good governance) and that resulted into people losing faith in the governments. We need to restore the faith of the people in government."

On a question on tackling black money, he described "black money" as anti-national activity. "The whole country is worried about black money. I assure the countrymen that when we form a government in Delhi, we will create a task force and make or amend laws to bring every single rupee deposited in foreign countries by Indian citizens."

He even announced an incentive scheme for regular and genuine tax players and salaried class, saying that 5 to 10% amount from the total amount of black money brought from abroad will be distributed among regular tax players as incentive.

According to Modi, eastern Indian has not seen development despite abundant resources like land, water, coal etc.

"We need development in states like Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Northeast states. I think special attention needs to be paid to states in eastern India. Bihar is not poor and people there are very talented but bad governance and a peculiar political culture in the last 20 years has destroyed the state."

In Bihar, hundreds of tea stalls -- many of them on and around Patna's Beerchand Patel Marg, where the BJP's Bihar headquarters are located -- turned into impromptu 'NaMo' tea stalls and setting for a grand tea party all present reveled in.

"Never quite sold as many cups of tea as long as I can remember, than I did today," admitted a beaming Sahkkhu Bhaiya, owner of a tea stall in close proximity to where many Bihar MLAs have taken residence.

When Patna's turn came, the honour to confront Modi with a question fell upon the shoulders of one Gopal Prasad Yadav, owner of the 'national tairak tea stall' at Kazipur (Patna). The tea shop name appeared to have a reference to the owner's credentials as an erstwhile national-level swimmer.

He fumbled and fumbled, not sure whether he had to ask a question or it was Modi's responsibility to do so. But he had the right credential – a Yadav, who constitute over 12% of Bihar population and believed to be the vote bank of RJD chief Lalu Prasad.

Scores of tea stall sold hundreds of cups of tea during the PR exercise. In the process, a bit of the NaMo persona was sold, too, to an excited audience. In the run-up the parliamentary polls, the BJP is likely to organise around 15 sessions of 'chai pe charcha' and the party is aiming at directly interacting with around two crore voters through the medium.

## POWER INDUSTRY

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 13, 2014

**Delhi: Break the law, get 50% power bill waiver**

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday decided to reward those consumers who refused to pay power bills on its request during the last year's agitation against alleged inflated electricity and water bills.

The consumers who refused payments from October 2012 and April 2013---the period of the agitation---will now have to shell out only 50% of the pending amounts, said AAP minister

Manish Sisodia. They also don't have to pay penalties.

The decision will benefit 24,036 people and it will cost the government Rs. 6 crore.

The AAP had launched a Bijli Pani Andolan in the national capital against inflated power and water bills. As part of the campaign, the Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had urged people not to pay their power bills.

Although about a million people signed AAP's petition against power distribution companies during the agitation, only 24,000-odd consumers actually stopped paying their bills.

"During the agitation, a total of 2,508 electricity meters were disconnected by the authorities concerned for non-payment of inflated and wrong bills. The government has decided to provide relief to those people also so that they do not suffer for wrong decisions of the previous government," a government spokesman said.

"The government has also decided to consider the closure of theft cases registered against some consumers during the previous government," he said.

In its manifesto, Kejriwal had announced a 50 per cent subsidy on electricity consumption of up to 400 units in Delhi after coming to power.

Later, the AAP government also asked the comptroller and auditor general to audit the finances of the three private power distribution companies supplying electricity to Delhi.  
(With PTI inputs)

## **PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

PIONEER, FEB 11, 2014

### **'FAIR PRICE SHOPS TO BE OPENED IN EVERY GRAM PANCHAYAT'**

Beside, salesmasn would be asked to manag every shop. He instructed officers to strengthen system by doing making surprise Public distribution shops. Kunwar Shah was addressing a division level meeting at Gwalior on Sunday.

The Food Minister stated that Food Safety Act will be implemented from March 1, 2014. For it, he also instructed officers to complete necessary preparations within the time limit.

He said that all BPL and Antyodaya card holder families of 22 categories are to be brought under the purview of the Act. He said that no eligible person should be deprived of it. Shah also stated to certify registration of willing farmers compulsorily till March 10, 2014.

He instructed officers to keep complete transparency in wheat eProcurement. Minister Kunwar Shah also directed to examine weighing scales before the farmers every day.

## RAILWAYS

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 13, 2014

### **Railways Vote on Account 2014: No fare hike, 72 new trains**

Kharge announced 72 new trains and promised to allow foreign direct investment (FDI) in his maiden budget that showed a worsening of railway finances.

NEW DELHI: The United Progressive Alliance government left passenger and freight fares unchanged in the interim [railway budget](#) ahead of the general elections, presenting a vote-on-account that left the difficult task of fixing the state-run monopoly's damaged finances to the next government.

Railway minister Mallikarjun Kharge, who took charge of the ministry about eight months back, announced 72 new trains and promised to allow foreign direct investment ([FDI](#)) in his maiden budget that showed a worsening of railway finances.

[Shares](#) of companies that manufacture equipment for the railways such as [Kalindi Rail](#), [Kernex Microsystems](#) [BSE -5.90 %](#), [Texmaco Rail Engineering](#) and [Titagarh Wagons](#) [BSE -7.12 %](#) fell 1-4% after the budget speech because of lack of any big investment thrust.

In an election year, the outgoing government presents an interim budget that allows the country to run until a new government is in [place](#). By convention, no big policy announcements are made in an interim budget. Finance minister [P Chidambaram](#) is set to present his vote on account to Parliament on February 17.

Indian Railways just doesn't have enough money to do what it needs to do, the minister said. "Inadequacy of financial resources is a key constraint to railways following the desired path," Kharge said before he was forced to cut short his speech because of the din created by some members over the Telangana issue.

He listed the achievement of the railways under the second term of the UPA, glossing over the fact that passenger fares were only raised in January after a nine-year gap even as expenses mounted, leaving the railways with barely any surplus for investment in capacity, expansion and passenger amenities.

The operating ratio, a measure of expenses as a percentage of revenue, is seen deteriorating to 90.8% in 2013-14 compared with a budgeted 87.8% and 90.2% in 2012-13. Kharge has targeted to improve this to 89.8% in 2014-15.

"By a single stroke we cannot solve all the problems that have been infecting the Indian railway system over the decades," minister of state for railways Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said, adding that it faced "heaps of problems".

Kharge thanked the finance minister as he sought over Rs 30,223 crore from the general budget and proposed Rs 12,800 crore of market borrowing to fund the Rs 64,305-crore annual plan in 2014-15, up just 8.3% over the revised Rs 59,359 crore in the last fiscal.

"This is a zero extra fare budget. We are seeking to generate revenue by getting more passengers and loading more," said Arunendra Kumar, chairman of the Railway Board.

The railways plans to achieve this through improved ticket checking and using IT to improve sales. On the freight side, an empty flow discount and higher loads on all routes was proposed. The discount will apply to wagons that go back empty.

The railways has budgeted an increase of 49.7 million tonnes in freight traffic target over the current year's revised target of about 1,052 million tonnes.

It expects a recovery in the economy to boost receipts 14.4% to Rs 1.60 lakh crore and contain the expenditure increase at 14% despite rising prices while hoping to generate a surplus of 10,538 crore compared with Rs 7,943 crore expected in the current fiscal.

"What is disturbing is that despite the significant hike in passenger fares and freight, the O&M (operations and maintenance) cost management has not been good. Also, traffic does not increase too much so while one can blame the economy, railways should also revisit the traffic side and come up with innovative measures like flexi-pricing," said R Sivadasan, former finance commissioner at the rail ministry.

Kharge also announced 17 new [premium](#) trains, 39 express trains and 10 passenger trains, adding that services to Katra, the base camp for the Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu and Kashmir, will start soon.

Railway minister [Mallikarjun Kharge](#) listed Indian Railways' achievements under the UPA, but the last budget showed the country's lifeline was barely able to make ends meet, compromising its ability to invest in expansion, safety and convenience. ET looks at the key features of the Railway Budget for 2014-15:

HINDUSTAN TIMES, FEB 13, 2014

**No big-ticket announcements, rail minister keeps budget simple**

Union railways minister Mallikarjun Kharge can be accused of much else but not of succumbing to the temptation of playing to the gallery during his maiden budget speech on Wednesday.

Mr Kharge's predecessors Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar never missed such opportunities to make big, populist announcements: If Mr Prasad reduced passenger fares and created two new railway divisions, Mr Kumar announced 'Sampark Kranti' trains.

Presenting the interim budget for four months in the Lok Sabha, the UPA 2 government's last, Mr Kharge stuck to the script. His announcement that the Indian Railways plan to run 72 new trains (including 17 money-spinners christened 'Jai Hind Express') and semi-high speed trains were aberrations in an otherwise no-frills budget speech.

Mr Kharge's eight-month tenure at the helm of the ministry, which he took over in June 2013 from CP Joshi, has been difficult. The operating ratio (money spent against every rupee earned) of the Indian Railways has climbed from 87.8% to 90.8% this fiscal. There has been a radical fall in passenger earnings, while fuel costs have spiralled. As a result of shortfall in earnings, the ministry's plan outlay for the current year has been cut by almost ₹4,000 crore. The annual rail plan has been pegged at ₹64,305 crore with a budgetary support of ₹30,223 crore.

Reading out the budget amid the din over the Telangana issue, Mr Kharge, as anticipated, focussed on the railway's achievements during the 10 years of the UPA's rule: Rs. 35,000 crore invested in providing rail connectivity to the Northeast; the breakthrough achieved in enabling a rail link connecting the Jammu region with the Kashmir Valley; the rapid progress being made to execute the UPA 2 government's flagship scheme of building dedicated freight corridors on the country's eastern and western flanks.

Clearly, Mr Kharge is not in the race for the 'Most Popular Railway Minister' crown. So there were no announcements of fare cuts or chai in kullads for aam aadmi or luxury coaches for super-rich passengers. Straight and simple was Mr Kharge's theme and he stuck to it beautifully.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, FEB 11, 2014

### **Need to rebuild our cities: FM**

Finance minister P Chidambaram on Monday underscored the need to limit the size of cities to meet the pressures of rapid urbanisation in India.

Releasing the book *Transforming our cities, postcards of change*, written by noted economist Isher Judge Ahluwalia, the minister said, "It is important to arrest the decline of our cities and using the ideas in this book, we must rebuild our cities."

He drew attention to the estimates that one half of India would be living in cities after two decades and about 70% of the country would be city dwellers by the end of this century. The minister referred to new cities such as Navi Mumbai, Raipur and Ranchi.

Published by HarperCollins and from the Express Book Series, Ahluwalia's book is a collection of columns published in *The Indian Express* and *The Financial Express*.

As political parties debate different economic and financial governance models in an election year, Ahluwalia's book offers an eyewitness account of the success stories of reforms and sustainable service delivery by unsung heroes, highlighting the pressures of rapid urbanisation. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh notes in his foreword to the book, it brings together living examples of local initiatives across India as having implications for future strategies of urbanisation.

Chairperson of the economic think-tank Icrier, Ahluwalia had earlier headed a panel on urban infrastructure and services. A Padma Bhushan recipient, she is also a member of the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council.

Arun Jaitley, leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said in a panel discussion after the book release that town planning often gets derailed because cities are not designed properly to meet the needs of the working class that migrates from villages in search of jobs.

## WATER SUPPLY

**FINANCIAL EXPRESS, FEB 11, 2014**

**Asit K Biswas & Cecilia Tortajada: Delhi's water supply - Going, going, gone?**

**Providing clean water to Delhi is no rocket science. What is missing is some political will and competent leadership**

In the early 1950s, the quality of urban water services in [Delhi](#) was similar to the best of other major urban centres of Asia. In fact, in 1950, shortly after the second World War, water provisioning in Delhi was better than Tokyo or Osaka. At that time, Tokyo was losing nearly 85 per cent of its water through leakages and poor maintenance. Even at the beginning of the 1960s, Delhi's [water supply](#) was similar to that of Singapore and better than Bangkok, Manila or Phnom Penh.

Many Asian cities such as Bandar Seri Begawan, Bangkok, Colombo, Manila, Phnom Penh and Singapore have improved their water services significantly in the post-1970 period. Sadly, Delhi's services have been on a downward spiral. Currently, all the above cities are providing their inhabitants with 24 hours of clean water that can be drunk straight from the taps. In contrast, less than two-thirds of the Delhi households are lucky to receive even one to three hours of water that is not even drinkable without additional treatment at home.

Slightly more than a decade ago, Delhi residents used simple carbon filters to purify city water before drinking. Currently, the quality has so worsened that an average Delhi household uses membranes and reverse osmosis before they can dare to drink city water.

Let us compare Singapore and Delhi, which had similar levels of water and drainage services for monsoon rains around 1960. When Singapore became independent in 1965, the then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew realised that water was a strategic resource for national development. Singapore formulated long-term urban water management plans, and Prime Minister Lee insisted on getting a monthly report on the progress of the water situation until he retired in 1990. In a private discussion, he told us that he had three experts in his office who regularly assessed all major development decisions through the lens of water before they could be approved.

Not surprisingly, with such high-level continuous political support, within 20 years Singapore became one of the best examples of urban water and wastewater management in the world.

In contrast, since independence, India has never had a prime minister or even a single chief minister of any province who was interested in water on a regular basis, and appreciated its importance for the country's development. They become interested in water only when there was a major flood, drought or natural disaster. As soon as the problem disappeared from the media, the interest of the senior Indian politicians in water evaporated.

A good example is Sheila Dikshit, who served as chief minister of Delhi from 1998 to 2013. She complained that the [Delhi Jal Board \(DJB\)](#) had "20,000 unsackable employees." However, during nearly the 15 years she was in power, neither she nor her party had the desire, courage or vision to restructure an incompetent and inefficient DJB.

To start with, take the case of CEOs of DJB. Their only qualification is that they must be Indian Administrative Services officers. None of them, when they arrive at the Board, have any idea as to how to run a large water utility efficiently, or any experience in managing a complex multidimensional business. Their average stay is about three years. They are neither responsible nor accountable for the performance of the utility.

Delhi politicians and bureaucrats have long forgotten that the main reason for DJB to exist is to provide the people of Delhi with good water and wastewater services. A utility does not exist for the benefit of its employees, or for the vested interests that profit from the ongoing highly unsatisfactory situation.

When the long-suffering residents of Delhi thought their water situation could not get any worse, the newly elected Aam Aadmi Party ([AAP](#)) came with a policy that would significantly worsen the situation over the medium-term. It will be a disaster over the long-term.

DJB is now mandated by AAP to provide each household that is connected with 670 litres of water per day. Since the Board now loses 45 to 55 per cent of its water from the system, this means it has to pump 1,005 litres per household. The average water consumption for a person in a European city like Hamburg is about 100 litres per capita per day. This means Delhi must plan to provide free water that would sustain a 10-member household in several European cities like Hamburg.

Equally, this free water will be provided only to existing customers who are connected. Sadly, around a third of the households which are poor do not have connections. Under the AAP plan, the really poor will see no benefits, which will go primarily to the rich and middle-class families.

Had AAP done a simple calculation as to how much water will be needed to pump 1,005 litres of free water for each household of Delhi, it would have found out that this supply is not even available. The only way an inefficient DJB can get extra water will be through inter-state water transfer. Chances of this happening any time soon is near zero.

Bad though Delhi's water supply is, the performance of DJB to manage its wastewater is one of the worst of any cities in the world. It basically discharges nearly all its wastewater untreated into the Yamuna river. Consequently, this river has become an open sewer near Delhi.

Provision of clean water and management of wastewater to all the households of Delhi is not rocket science. We have known for decades what needs to be done. Knowledge and technology have been long available. Equally, availability of investment funds is not an issue, assuming funds are used effectively and efficiently. What is missing in Delhi, as in all major Indian urban centres, is political will and competent leadership for a reasonable period of five to seven years who would be held accountable for the performance of the utility.

Conceptually, technically and economically, there is absolutely no reason why an average Delhi household cannot receive clean water on a 24-hour basis, which can be drunk straight from the tap. There is no conceivable reason as to why Delhi's wastewater cannot be properly treated and then reused. To ensure a good sustainable model in financial and water conservation terms, each household must pay for water which should not exceed two per cent of the household income. Any subsidy must be specifically targeted only to the poor. All this can be achieved within seven to 10 years, provided the politicians and the bureaucrats can summon enough courage to take some tough decisions, including radical restructuring of the DJB and an affordable water tariff. For this to happen, the public and the media must become incensed for receiving a third-grade service at premium prices. India is becoming an important economic power but its urban water and wastewater management are approaching that of a banana republic.

## WOMEN

HINDU, FEB 10, 2014

**India's missing women**

MUDIT KAPOOR &

On her arrival in India recently, the words of Gloria Steinem, American feminist and leader of the women's liberation movement, sounded like bells tolling for all women in today's modern Indian society. "I came [to India] and what was here a half-a-century ago is still here... and yet there is everything else." Studying data on the sex ratio in India over 60 years supports her grim observation. In this essay we provide a political economy explanation for the persistence of gender inequality in Indian society over the long run.

The much debated Women's Reservation Bill proposes to reserve a third of all legislature seats for women, at national and State levels in India. If passed, this Bill would uplift the general mood of the nation which has been engulfed by a heightened sense of gender inequality over the last year. Following the brutal rape and murder of a 23-year-old student of physiotherapy in Delhi last year, there was massive and prolonged outpouring of public anger across the nation. India has never looked more unsafe for women. The Bill is going to assuage a hurt population. It is, however, unlikely to solve the fundamental problem that Indian women suffer from.

Within a democratic system, policies are implemented by a government that is formed "by the consent of the governed." In India, even though fair elections are held at regular intervals for State Assemblies and the National Parliament, they do not reflect the true consent of the people because a large number of women voters are "missing" from the electorate. We estimate that more than 65 million women (approximately 20 per cent of the female electorate) are missing and, therefore, these elections reveal the preferences (or the will) of a population that is artificially skewed against women.

### Worsening sex ratio

The phrase "missing women" was coined by Amartya Sen when he showed that in parts of the developing world, the ratio of women to men in the population is suspiciously low. The worsening sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) in countries such as India and China reflected the gross neglect of women. He estimated that more than 100 million women were missing due to gender discrimination. It was commonly believed that "boy preference" at birth and the mistreatment of young girls were the main reasons. Some careful and subsequent data work by Anderson and Ray showed that excess female mortality is a more universal phenomenon which holds for all age groups in these countries. They provided detailed decomposition of the missing women by age and cause of death and a particularly sinister observation was that the number of excess female deaths from "intentional injuries" or reported violence was disturbingly high in India.

There is unanimous agreement among experts that this phenomenon is one of the most momentous problems faced by the developing world in modern times. The general sense

is that it can be corrected by political action and public policy. It is in that regard that we explore the role of democracy in solving the missing women's problem. We analyse Indian electorate data over 50 years and study whether solutions to this dangerous trend can emerge from within such a political system.

Using Dr. Sen's methodology, we compute the sex ratio in the electorate across all the States in India over 50 years. The electorate includes all the people who are registered to vote in elections. In the next step, we use Kerala, the State with the best sex ratio in the electorate, as a reference for all the States to compute the number of missing women. This simple analysis throws up three shocking facts.

First, in the last 50 years of Indian democracy, the absolute number of missing women has increased fourfold from 15 million to 68 million. This is not merely a reflection of the growth in the overall population, but, rather, of the fact that this dangerous trend has worsened with time. As a percentage of the female electorate, missing women have gone up significantly — from 13 per cent to approximately 20 per cent.

Second, the adverse sex ratio of the electorate in India has not changed significantly over the last 50 years. In fact, when we look at different States, we see that it has become worse for most of the large backward States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. This disappointing trend means that there are many more missing women voters in the population. Hence, fewer female voters will voice their opinions through elections. Political decisions which are based on election outcomes therefore underrepresent the female population. They are not a true reflection of the female policy preferences.

Third, with the exception of a very few States such as Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, the sex ratio in the electorate is far worse than the general sex ratio in the population. This means that not all the women who are eligible to vote in Indian elections are registered to vote and, therefore, they are missing from the electoral list. In backward States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, this difference is as high as 9.3 and 5.7 percentage points which translated into millions in absolute numbers.

The worsening sex ratio of the Indian electorate has deep and long lasting consequences given the democratic system of governance. Within a democracy, politicians compete to get elected and though it is well recognised that men and women differ in their policy preferences, the adverse sex ratio of the electorate will make it unlikely that the preferences of women get significant attention.

### Competitive electoral politics

In fact, because of the missing women, the competitive electoral process will perpetuate gender-biased policies in India. The problem here is that the politicians respond to the preferences of the existing electorate in the population and not to the counterfactual.

If the 65 million missing women were present within the electorate, they would have an important influence in shaping government policies. What is troubling in a democratic system of governance is that even if a politician is not biased against women in his policy preferences, the electoral competition will ensure that he chooses policies in favour of his average electorate which is increasingly male-dominated in India. This is why gender-biased practices and policies will be perpetuated over the long run in a democratic system like India's unless there is an exogenous shock to this system.

This problem is akin to a market failure for democracy. Indeed, this could potentially explain why the existing political framework is inadequately equipped to address this pressing concern and why gender bias has persisted in Indian society. It is also not surprising that even though India has had a very good track record of holding regular elections and a democratic form of government, it remains one of worst performers in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) of the World Bank. The GII captures the loss in achievement within a country due to gender inequality and is based on measures of health, labour force participation and empowerment. In the Human Development Report, 2012, India performs more poorly than neighbouring Pakistan in the GII despite having a higher per capita income and a democratic government. More strikingly, it is ranked 133rd out of 146 countries and even lags behind war-torn countries such as Iraq and Sudan.

#### Mixed results

To what extent, then, can women's reservation in Parliament and the State Assemblies address the gender bias problem in India? In our opinion, this will have a very limited impact. The underlying assumption with the Women's Reservation Bill is that women as policymakers are more sensitive to women-related issues. However, it is crucial to note that India has experimented with women's reservation at the level of the panchayat or village councils since the mid-1990s. This has generated very interesting research on whether women's reservation has had any impact on the allocation of resources towards women. So far, the evidence from this experiment is mixed — some find evidence in favour of a positive impact while others do not find any impact of this reservation.

The impact of the reservation, I believe, will depend on the exact nature of the reservation policy. For example, if seats are reserved on a quick rotation basis then there might be no long-term policies favouring women and thereby having minimal impact. On the other hand, if seats are reserved for a certain number of election rounds then the impact would depend on the basis of the reservation at the constituency level. Here, we are inclined to propose a reservation policy based on the gender ratio in the constituency — reserve those seats where the gender ratio of women to men is the worst. The fundamental reason for this is that an adverse gender ratio is a measure of neglect of women in that society. So, if the objective of women's reservation is “compensatory justice” then it should start with those constituencies where the neglect is the highest.

The competitive electoral process, however, is likely to undo the impact of any women's reservation policy. The logic of this is that if both men and women have equal rights to

vote, then even in reserved constituencies where there are fewer women compared to men, women political candidates who compete with each other to get themselves elected might choose policies which favour men. Once again, the competitive electoral process even in the presence of women's reservation, might perpetuate gender-biased policies.

In a nutshell, the competitive electoral process in Indian democracy with or without women's reservation will fail to deliver policies that are not gender-biased. In the presence of missing women, whose consent cannot be taken into account in the electoral process, democracy will fail to deliver policies that promote women's welfare (especially in those situations where there is a divergence in opinion between men and women). India can begin to address this disaster by first recognising that an adverse gender ratio is a human rights problem which is an outcome of the sustained, gross neglect of women. And the solution for this lies outside the competitive democratic system.

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Even though fair elections are held at regular intervals for State Assemblies and Parliament, they do not reflect the true consent of the people because a large number of women are missing from the electorate