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CHILD WELFARE

STATESMAN, FEB 12, 2015

Child in distress

Amartya Sen

The striking feature of the second edition of the Pratichi Child Report, released by Amartya Sen in Kolkata on Monday, is that it has gone beyond yet another recital of the dismal state of primary education. It is more than obvious that the parameters have been broadbased, verily covering one of life's essentials Rs drinking water for children. Seven years after the previous report, the present has few bouquets to offer to West Bengal and Bihar, the two focal points of the Pratichi Trust's area-studies. In equal measure, it covers two very different political dispensations Rs that of the CPI-M (in the years between 2008 and 2011) and the Trinamul Congress thereafter. The rest is history. It is a collective shame that successive administrations have had to be reminded of the elementary the welfare of children hinges critically on the kind of water that they get to drink. Which would suggest that invariably it isn't fit for human consumption.

The fingerprint of the survey is obvious. The quality of drinking water for the child symbolises the brittle foundation, one that has been embroidered with such "flagship" schemes as universal elementary education and centres of excellence. Not wholly unrelated is child nutrition, an aspect that unfortunately has not been taken care of in the Food Security Act. Universal elementary education is but one facet of child development, a fundamental right that is granted as often as not by lottery and/or donations. May be the next edition of the Pratichi report could focus on the dire shortcomings of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Arguably, the time-span between reports could also be cut. The states in focus have had to wait for close to seven years after the first report was crafted, which incidentally was a decade after Sen pledged his Nobel prize money to fund the Pratichi Trust. More frequent reports on public policy and micro-level studies on development economics can ramp up the pressure on stumbling governments, both in the states and at the Centre.

Sen strikes a deft balance between growth and development. In his reckoning, while growth has not stalled, more development ought to have taken place. It is small beer to reflect that West Bengal is doing better than Bihar in terms of the Integrated Child

Development Services (ICDS). The reality is distressing enough with 36 per cent of the ICDS centres in the state having to make do without toilets.

Pratichi appears to be fairly impressed with “some progress” in Bihar where toilet facilities are non-existent in 80 per cent of the centres. If indeed Bengal is “doing better” than Bihar, it can at best yield a sense of misplaced comfort for altogether the Pratichi report is a distressing read.

CIVIL SERVICE

TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 14, 2015

Babus chosen, cabinet starts work today

[Ambika Pandit](#)

NEW DELHI: The secretariat is all set for the new "aam aadmi" government and chief minister Arvind Kejriwal is ready to get on the job soon after taking oath on Saturday. The first cabinet meeting of the new government will take place at 4.30pm. The CM, deputy CM and five other cabinet colleagues are expected to do a brief stock-taking and pave the way for a two-day assembly session likely to be scheduled on February 23 and 24. Power, water and inflation are key concerns the government is expected to take up urgently.

On December 28, 2013, which marked the beginning of AAP's first government, Kejriwal in his first official briefing as CM had said his government was the common man's opportunity to seek solutions to problems like water, power and inflation.

Kejriwal's first day in the secretariat then was marked by frenetic activity as the corridors of power were streaming with AAP supporters and media persons. In what was a beginning by AAP to end the 'VIP culture', Kejriwal drove into the secretariat in his blue WagonR and brought to an end the practice of using cars fitted with red beacons, and PSOs for babus. The government restricted the use of beacons to cars for emergency operations, and security staff only for those who face a threat.

Now all eyes are on how the AAP government, which has 96% of the seats, will implement its 70-point agenda for Delhi's development. After the CM's address at Ramlila Maidan, the first cabinet meeting will set the tone for governance. Deputy CM Manish Sisodia is learned to have scheduled a meeting of the education department on Saturday where concerns about nursery admissions are likely to be a priority.

The CM is also ready with a line-up of bureaucrats who will assist him and the deputy CM. While chief secretary DM Spolia's continuance till the end of his tenure on February 27 is under consideration of the government, the CM is ready for administration with a team of hand-picked officials. Urban development secretary Rajinder Kumar, a 1989-batch IAS officer and IIT alumnus like Kejriwal, will be the CM's principal secretary. Kejriwal picked Kumar in his first stint also. Dr N Vasantha Kumar, a 2004-batch IAS officer who holds charge of health in Delhi, will be special secretary to Kejriwal. Deputy CM Manish Sisodia has picked 1996-batch DANICS officer C Arvind, who is posted in VAT and Sales Tax department. He was Sisodia's secretary last time also.

The first assembly session is likely to be scheduled for February 23-24. All MLAs will be administered oath on the first day before a Speaker is nominated. On the second day of the assembly, LG Najeeb Jung will deliver his first address reflecting the policy of the new government.

In the days ahead, the government will study matters linked to power, water and inflation and hold a departmental review on February 19 where plans for budgetary allocations will also be firmed up. The government will have to decide on the power subsidy issue as a provision for it has to be made as part of the budget outlay which needs to be passed before March 31.

The budget outlay of more than Rs 35,000 crore for the year 2015-16 is expected to be passed by way of a vote-on-account sometime in March in a special session of the assembly. This will be followed by a full-fledged budget a month or so later that will present schemes and plans based on AAP's 70-point agenda.

DECCAN HERALD, FEB 11, 2015

More needs to be done

Bureaucracies, if not competently led, tend to morph into interest groups with a focus on preserving their own privileges.

India's ossified bureaucracy is being shuffled like never before. Not only was Anil Goswami asked to put in his papers in the wake of controversy over his alleged attempt to stall the arrest of Saradha scam accused Matang Singh, a former Congress minister at the Centre, but there was also the rather dramatic sacking of Sujatha Singh from the post of the Foreign Secretary and the appointment of S Jaishankar to that position.

The rumours about this development were floating around for quite some time. Still, when the decision actually came to replace Singh about seven months before the end of her tenure, it ended up sending shock waves through the complacent Indian foreign policy establishment.

No one seems to be contesting that Jaishankar is a great choice. Yet, the critics of the decision have largely focused on bureaucratic niceties by suggesting Jaishankar's appointment not only curtailed Singh's career but also ended up blocking the career prospects of some senior Indian Foreign Service (IFS).

The reaction of the Congress has been rather strange with former information and broadcasting minister Manish Tewari trying to link the action to the Khobragade episode involving an IFS officer who was jailed in the US two years back for allegedly mistreating her maid. He tweeted: "Is sacking of foreign secretary late retribution for her stand on Devyani Khobragade affair? Removal after a Presidential visit 'coincidental'?"

Such criticisms of the government's decision are missing the key point. This decision should be viewed as part of a larger, and much needed, bureaucratic shake-up that the prime minister is engendering. Just two weeks back, the government had also terminated the appointment of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) chief Avinash Chander, 15 months before his contract was to end.

Prime ministers till now have devoted, at best, occasional interest in nuclear and strategic policy issues, mainly preferring to delegate substantial levels of policymaking discretion to organisations like the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the DRDO. The conduct of the DRDO has been largely driven by an effort to protect its direct communicative link to the prime minister, secure recurrent generous funding, and maintain a high level of autonomy.

Given its significant budgetary resources in the context of a developing nation, DRDO has repeatedly failed in delivering quality output. Major projects of the DRDO including the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, Nag missile, long-range surface-to-air missile project and the airborne early warning and control system have either not been completed on time or have resulted in huge cost over-runs. It took the agency almost a decade and a half to operationalise the Agni-I.

The inattention or inability of the Prime Minister's Office so far to take concrete steps to improve the DRDO's performance and compel it to cooperate with other defence bureaucratic stakeholders has permitted it a remarkable degree of self-governance in budgetary prioritisation, project design and delivery timescale planning, and setting operational policy through regular statements outlining the doctrinal meaning of DRDO products.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had criticised the DRDO for its 'chalta hai' attitude during an address in Kargil in August last year when he had said, "If a project was conceived in 1992, it should not be the case in 2014 we are still saying it will take some more time."

And in December last year, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence had censured the DRDO, accusing it of shoddy research, chronic inefficiency, inordinate delays, corruption and its penchant for reverse engineering. The government seems to have taken the bull by the horns and removed Chander to ensure some semblance of accountability in the organisation.

Bureaucratic resistance

The appointment of Jaishankar is also along the same lines that merit would be rewarded. The Indian Foreign Service (IFS) needs to recognise that business as usual is no longer enough. At a time when India's global imprint is expanding rapidly, a risk-averse foreign policy bureaucracy will not be able to meet the aspirations of the nation. The idea that seniority should determine who should be nation's top diplomat is an idea whose time was long gone. But bureaucratic resistance has prevented any substantive reforms in the service. There are hardly any incentives to perform and hardly any penalties for underperformance.

As a result, nearly everyone in the diplomatic service manages to rise to the upper

echelons. Despite the fact that the best and the brightest are no longer attracted to the IFS, there have been few attempts to cultivate outside expertise, with hardly any opportunities for lateral entry or temporary rotations.

In fact, it was Manmohan Singh who had wanted to introduce lateral entry in the Indian bureaucracy in his first term but the idea was quietly killed by the bureaucracy (who else?). Personnel are scarce and demands are growing on the IFS but Indian diplomats have not managed to transform the service and change its character to suit the needs of the time. Is it any wonder then that ad hocism pervades Indian foreign policy thinking?

Bureaucracies, if not competently led and directed, tend to morph into interest groups with a focus on preserving their own institutional privileges. In democracies, effective political control and guidance is absolutely critical if the role of bureaucracies is not to become corrosive on policy-making. It is in the nature of bureaucracies to be risk averse. Leave them alone and they will muddle along the path of least resistance, trying to increase their power by resisting change. The Modi government is right in shaking things up and making Indian bureaucracies more accountable and effective. But much more remains to be done!

(The writer is Professor of International Relations, King's College London)

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 9, 2015

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates memorial for officers killed abroad

Official sources said the memorial sculpture is a set of six installations of a bird of paradise flower in bloom, made of sandstone stems and titanium petals.

NEW DELHI: Government officials who lay down their lives overseas in the call of duty will now have a memorial. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) inaugurated the remembrance plaque at the new Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan on Saturday in the presence of India's ambassadors and high commissioners.

Official sources said the memorial sculpture is a set of six installations of a bird of paradise flower in bloom, made of sandstone stems and titanium petals. Titled 'Transformation', it is a creation of two artists from the [National Institute of Design](#), Jatin Bhatt and Prakash Vani. The inscription on the plaque, from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, reads, " [Mrityorma Amritam Gamaya](#)" (from death to immortality).

The foreign service lost B Venkateswara Rao in the 2008 Taliban attack on the embassy in [Kabul](#) while Ravindra Mhatre was killed by [JKLF](#) terrorists in UK in 1984. Surprisingly, the foreign ministry doesn't plan to put up individual commemorative plaques.

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 10, 2015

Reshuffle of government officials on cards By Ambika Pandit

Since the Centre is in-charge of clearing appointment of IAS officials, all eyes are now on the how a new government, particularly if it is AAP , will choose its bureaucrats.

NEW DELHI: Even before the assembly election results are out, Delhi government bureaucracy is already anticipating a churn in the top rungs. The main person in focus is chief secretary DM Spolia who was removed from the top slot when the [AAP](#) government took charge on December 28, 2013. Later, Spolia returned to the top post in a bureaucratic reshuffle and the BJP-led Centre sent AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal's chosen man, former [DDA](#) vice-chairman SK Srivastava, to Delhi Finance Commission. Spolia is to retire on February 27, but the buzz is whether a new government will allow him to complete his tenure. Since the Centre is in-charge of clearing appointment of IAS officials, all eyes are now on the how a new government, particularly if it is AAP , will choose its bureaucrats.

Sources said that if AAP does make the majority mark, SK Srivastava may not return to the top slot. However, other senior officials hand-picked by Kejriwal and his team are likely to return to the forefront. Nearly a hundred officials were either transferred or reshuffled by the AAP government during its 49-day stint. The transfer spree began within hours of the new government taking charge as more than half a dozen top bureaucrats from the Sheila Dikshit regime were reshuffled. \

One of the last orders involved the transfer of 15 SDMs two days before Kejriwal resigned over the [Jan Lokpal Bill](#). The AAP government gave special attention to departments involved in public dealing, like revenue, anti-corruption branch, sub-registrar and VAT department.

COMPUTERS

HINDU, FEB 10, 2015

Haryana set to launch Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan

ASHOK KUMAR

Out to achieve the goal of 'Digital Haryana' and keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies, the Haryana Government is set to roll out Information Technology Mass Literacy Scheme or "Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan", to make the people of the state digitally literate.

Giving details, Electronics and Information Technology Department spokesperson said that under the programme to be rolled out through the Common Service Centres (CSCs), training would be imparted to 1.10 lakh persons in five selected blocks picking up one person from every eligible household. One block each in Gurgaon, Faridabad, Karnal, Jind and Panchkula districts has been selected for the programme. Giving further details about the levels of training, he said that under level-1, training would be imparted to make a person IT-literate and enable him to operate a computer or digital access devices, send and receive emails, and surf the internet for information.

Under level-2, those selected would be trained to effectively avail themselves of various government-to-citizen and business-to-citizen services besides basic level IT literacy.

The main objective is to declare the selected blocks 100 per cent digitally literate. For this, 20,000 beneficiaries are to be trained under phase I by October, 2015. In addition, 90,000 more would be trained in level 1 and level 2 digital literacy courses over a period of four years.

He said that 50 per cent of the seats for beneficiaries would be reserved for SC/ ST/ BPL categories.

Training will be imparted to 1.10 lakh persons in five selected blocks. One persons will be picked from every eligible household

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

STATESMAN, FEB 9, 2015

Governance by slogans

Anurabha Bagchi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is coming up with one slogan a month, and sometimes even more. At the Economic Times Global Business Summit, Modi declared that the government was preparing the ground for India to be transformed in the years ahead from a \$2 trillion economy to a \$20 trillion one. Thus another slogan was born. This announcement was a considerable disappointment for me. In this resurgent period of our Vedic consciousness, I expected our PM to express the strength of our economy in terms of prayuta, arbuda, nyarbuda, samudra, madhy, anta and parardha. This American slang of trillion dollar economies was so out of place in the current climate in India!

On a more serious note, the announcement left many questions unanswered. In roughly how many years are we supposed to reach that goal of a \$20 trillion economy? Is this \$20 trillion inflation adjusted, or with our typical rate of 7 per cent inflation or more? Has this been calculated with our current exchange rate, or taking into consideration future devaluation or revaluation of rupee vis-à-vis dollar? What rate of GDP growth does that imply per year? If and when we achieve this goal, would we have more billionaires than in the US, or would we be able to stop the scourge of malnourished children and anaemic women in our country?

The following day at the Summit, some minsters expounded on this latest slogan of our PM. Our new Railway minister, Suresh Prabhu, explained the philosophical significance of a slogan by asserting that a slogan is “a must before undertaking a major overhaul or even leading a movement for governance reform from within.” He explained that the “Quit India” slogan given by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 and the slogan of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to “shed blood in return for freedom” played vital roles in achieving our Independence. What our minister failed to mention is that our great freedom-fighters’ slogans were few and far between. The other slogan of Mahatma Gandhi that had a huge impact on his countrymen was “Swaraj” that was announced more than 20 years before his call for the “Quit India” movement.

Less than two weeks before the summit, Modi came up with another slogan. It was on

“digital connectivity” and our PM declared it to be as much a basic right as access to school. Within two weeks of this announcement, we learnt from a major survey how much our poor and marginalised children benefited from the basic right of access to school. The 10th Annual Status of Education Report said, “In 2014, in Class 3, only a fourth of all children can read a Class 2 text fluently. This number rises to just under half in Class 5. Even in Class 8, close to 75 per cent of the children can read Class 2 level text (which implies that 25 per cent still cannot).” It is better not to quote their findings on basic arithmetic skills. And this is only the average, including the privileged urban upper/middle class children!

It seems that our policy-makers decided to skip the phase of “basic competence in reading and arithmetic” for our children, and jump over to the phase of “digital connectivity” already. This is reminiscent of the claim of our economists that we joined the club of rich countries by jumping to the “services sector”-led economy, skipping the phase of the “manufacturing sector”-led economy in the process.

In the “Modiyug”, economists have become more muted in their grandiose claim of our service sector economy in response to the slogans “skilling India” and “Make in India” coined by our Prime Minister. There was huge consternation recently when the Governor of the Reserve Bank, an economist of international repute, dared to contradict Modi by suggesting that the slogan “Make in India” be better replaced by the slogan “Make for India.” He rightly pointed out that copies never work and mimicking the Chinese model of export-led growth may not be feasible in the current international climate of very slow growth in the industrialised countries in the coming five years, if not longer. Even if foreigners set up shops in India, those would not be labour intensive to provide employment for our millions of youths entering the job market every year. Another slogan repeated on many occasions is “minimum government, maximum governance.” Neo-liberals talk about minimum government and minimum governance. They want government to get off their back, so that corporations may make enormous profits, unencumbered by regulatory or tax authorities. The concept “maximum governance” is mysterious to me.

As regards “minimum government”, Modi demonstrated the concept by naming only 45 ministers after taking oath as the Prime Minister, as opposed to 78 in the UPA-II

government. But in less than three months, he expanded his government to the total count of 66 ministers, not a sign of minimum government. He did, however, keep his promise in a roundabout way. He asked secretaries of the ministries to contact him directly whenever necessary, thereby making the roles of ministers superfluous. Modi was criticized for conducting a presidential style campaign during the election. He has now logically set up a presidential form of administration, with the PMO acting as “White House Aides” and departmental secretaries as “Secretaries” running the ministries. The difference is that the departmental secretaries are political lightweights and, therefore, easier to manipulate than their counterparts in the United States.

With our economy poised for a manufacturing revolution with FDIs flowing from abroad, there is natural apprehension about its effect on forests, environment and livelihood of the tribal people. So a new slogan has been raised - “Zero defect, Zero effect.” Zero defects must refer to the quality of our manufactured products that would make them unassailable in the international marketplace. But that would be achieved with zero effect on our environment. It seems that we will not need any trade-off between industry and environment. I wondered how this could be possible? Then it dawned on me that the Vedic texts would provide the answer to this puzzle. There must be “pundits” assembled by our government working on this at present. So the government has merrily promulgated a decree on a new land acquisition law just after Parliament adjourned at the end of December.

I almost forgot the mother of all slogans, “Swachh Bharat Abhiyan” that is supposed to make our country clean, with toilets in all households, schools and public places, before the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 2 October 2019. No Indian with any intelligence seriously believes that anything of consequence will be achieved by that deadline. In Macaulay’s heyday, “Civics” was a popular choice of subject for Intermediate level university study that had no visible effect on students.

One can notice the difference in the perception of public cleanliness if one visits the border areas of France and Germany along the southern part of the river Rhine. Germans, who are so fastidious about their cleanliness, admire even more the cleanliness of the Japanese. These are determined by culture and take ages to change. With our government planning to spend thousands of crores on toilets, the Chinese must be already making

millions of our squat toilets, in anticipation of our businessmen making a beeline to buy them and sell them for profit to the government.

At the summit, our PM announced another slogan. To realise “Congress mukt Bharat”, he has replaced “inclusive growth” by the new mini-slogan of “cohesive growth.” Has the World Economic Summit at Davos picked it up? If they missed it, we still have the neoliberal economists at IMF and World Bank to do that for us.

EDUCATION

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 12, 2015

Central govt may roll out ‘KG to PG’ educational institutes

The NDA government could roll out a programme of setting up “kindergarten to post-graduate (KG to PG)” institutions in educationally-backward districts of the country.

According to sources, the proposal is being discussed within the HRD Ministry and could be announced in the Union Budget to be tabled on February 28.

As per the concept, integrated educational institutions offer education right from the first level — KG — till the end — PG. This enables students in backward areas to complete their education without having to migrate to bigger towns. Jamia Millia Islamia, Visva-Bharati and Banasthali universities are some such existing institutions. Sources said the proposed institutions could follow the Public Private Partnership model on a 50:50 cost sharing basis. The government may also raise the education cess from the current one to two per cent, generating an additional Rs 14,000 crore.

STATESMAN, FEB 9, 2015

DU elects two executive council members

Delhi University on Sunday declared two members as elected to its Executive Council, the highest decision-making body of the varsity.

“Abha Dev Habib, a physics teacher at Miranda House, has been re-elected to EC for a second-term. Dr. A.K. Bhagi, a chemistry professor at Dayal Singh College, followed Habib to the council,” a senior university official said.

Elections to the Executive and Academic Council were held on February 5 in which nearly 7,000 teachers had exercised their vote. While two members were to be elected for the EC, the Academic Council had 37 posts.

The Academic Council is responsible for the maintenance of standards of instruction, education and examination within the University. It has the right to advise the Executive Council on all academic matters.

The Executive Council, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, takes decisions regarding important matters including the extent of autonomy of its colleges, scholarships, withdrawal of privileges, disciplinary matters among others.

The term for both the council is three years.

While Habib was fielded by the Left-oriented Democratic Teachers' front, Bhagi was a candidate of the BJP-affiliated National Democratic Front of Teachers.

“The counting for the Academic Council is still on and the final votes tally will be announced on Monday,” the official added. – PTI

TIMES OF INDIA, FEB 13, 2015

Bangalore University will be split into four varsities

[Pavan M V,](#)

ENGALURU: A sub-committee headed by higher education minister R V Deshpande on Thursday decided to split Bangalore University into four units.

As per the decision, taken at a meeting with the law and finance departments, the university could be split before the beginning of the next academic year. It will be divided into Bangalore North University, Bangalore South University, Bangalore Central University and the present university at Jnanabharathi.

According to the sub-committee, the university at Jnanabharathi will become a unitary university like Jawaharlal Nehru University. The other three varsities - North, South and Central - will be affiliating universities. Providing smooth academic services and monitoring the 600 affiliated colleges has become burdensome, said a source who attended the meeting. The three affiliating universities will have 200 colleges each.

Each affiliating university will be given 100 acres to establish a campus; the remaining land will be used by the unitary university, sources said. BU's Jnanabharathi campus is spread across over 1,000 acres. Deshpande told TOI: "This will be presented before the cabinet for approval. It will enhance the quality of education and provide for better administration."

BACKGROUND

In 2013, then governor HR Bhardwaj rejected a bill drafted by the BJP government to bifurcate BU. But the present Congress government formed a sub-committee and asked

KR Venugopal, principal of the Visvesvaraya College of Engineering, to prepare a report on this issue.

TRIBUNE, FEB 9, 2015

Governor stresses need to promote research in varsities

Governor Kaptan Singh Solanki said today that India was a country of youths and with their scientific temperament and technical skill, they could take the nation to great heights. He was addressing the third convocation of DCR University of Science and Technology, Murthal. He emphasised the need for promoting research activities at the university level and the government should give financial assistance and other facilities to the researchers. Education Minister Ram Bilas Sharma advocated introduction of Sanskrit in the higher education institutions as the language had many job opportunities in other countries. Social Welfare Minister Kavita Jain and Sonapat MP Ramesh Kaushik also spoke on the occasion. Chairperson of the University Grant Commission (UGC) Ved Prakash said India was on the path of progress. There were 700 universities and 39,000 colleges in the country, he said. Vice Chancellor RP Dahiya listed the achievements of the university. As many as 534 pass-outs were awarded degrees.

ELECTIONS

TELEGRAPH, FEB 12, 2015

Modymandias

- Or lessons from an election Mukul Kesavan

The pharaoh lost. He still stares into the middle distance on every road - from his perch on high hoardings, from inside glazed posters on bus stops, from above the fold on weathered newspapers blown down the street. The impassivity is deliberate. This is the marbled gaze of the larger-than-life ruler, remote, all-knowing. When will he learn that he has lost? When his party's lease on those spaces runs out, perhaps. Till then that purposeful gaze bears witness to the pre-ordained triumph that didn't happen. In some dimension of space and time, Kiran Bedi is rehearsing her swearing-in speech... luckily, it isn't the one we live in.

watching the saturation coverage of the Aam Aadmi Party's sweeping win, I saw brief clips from Narendra Modi's speeches in Delhi which set the tone of the BJP's election campaign. Photographs suit Modi: still pictures lend his visage a certain gravitas. Video, not so much. When the BJP wins, the rhetorical excess of this style is hailed as masterly populism. The eye rolling, the elaborate mockery passes in good times for oratory. But in the aftermath of a BJP rout, the hand-waving, the mocking riff, for example, on shady money being paid into the AAP's coffers at dead of night, seemed faintly absurd, less an indictment of the party than the last speech of a pantomime character about to get his comeuppance.

It's hard to tell what the political implications of this electoral caning will be. An election that started out as a serious contest, ended as cartoon catastrophe for the BJP. It was the real-life equivalent of watching Wile E. Coyote run off the top of a cliff and pedal in mid-air before plummeting to a very hard landing. Or watching Jerry pound Tom with a gigantic mallet. It was a great or gruesome spectacle depending on your political affiliations, but the very luridness of the defeat made you wonder if it was as bad as it looked.

The BJP's spokespersons, understandably, did their best to pass it off as a local setback, not a judgment on the party's time in office. The other side was keen to emphasize Modi's ownership of the campaign and his responsibility, therefore, for the paddling the party received. The truth, as our triangulating television anchors like to say, is probably somewhere in the middle. But watching this electoral drama play out on television, brought three things into sharp relief.

One, the Delhi election clarified the plight of the failed turncoat. A successful opportunist escapes stigma because the world secretly admires a well-timed exit. But think of the wretch who jumps ship...then drowns in the water watching the abandoned vessel sail confidently towards the horizon.

Two, Kiran Bedi's bid to become chief minister must be one of the strangest candidacies for high electoral office in the history of the republic. That earnest yet hectoring manner, her knack for congratulating herself while admonishing others, the sheer weirdness of her utterances - her explanation of how she saw the light and joined the BJP is a personal favourite - catapult her into the Sarah Palin league of running-mates-who-sank-the-ship. The political systems are different, but both Palin and Bedi were being asked to run as sidekicks: Palin as John McCain's vice-president and Bedi as a local proxy for Narendra Modi. Both brought something that the alpha males didn't have. Palin was going to supply McCain with the oomph that he lacked, while Bedi was chosen to starch the BJP's Delhi campaign with an activist's piety and self-righteousness.

Bedi's performance right through the campaign was a patented mix of sycophancy, self-regard and daftness. Her last day as a chief ministerial candidate (and her last, I suspect, as a member of the BJP) was characteristically dissonant. Immediately after the results came in, she thanked Narendra Modi, the BJP and all its workers profusely for their faith in her and apologized elaborately for not having been up to the task they had trusted her with. She even thanked the party for making her chief minister without charging her for the privilege, almost as if the BJP customarily auctioned these positions.

Then, almost immediately afterwards, she denied she had lost at all. She had given of her best, she said; it was the BJP that had lost. The BJP was, according to her, "an interesting cadre-based party" that would go into the reasons for its defeat and explain them to the public. "An interesting cadre-based party" is one way of describing a party that you've just led to inglorious defeat but not one that suggests a long term future with said party. If I was Arun Jaitley (who allegedly proposed her candidature) or Amit Shah (who as party chief must have ratified it) I'd offer to resign. Kiran Bedi was no ordinary loose cannon: she was a whole arsenal of unpredictable artillery. What were they thinking?

Finally, everyone, is talking about the shredding of the BJP's aura of invincibility, but the most striking feature of the media's coverage of the rout was how little affection there is for the BJP in the public realm. Changing news channels, switching between English and Hindi news, I was surprised by how vindicated and excited anchors, reporters and studio guests were. At times, there was so much *Schadenfreude* sloshing around the studios that you wondered how the people inside kept from drowning in it. There was the odd Modi *bhakt* standing up for his hero, but for the most part no one seemed particularly concerned or unhappy.

Some of this has to do with the BJP's winning streak. When dominant parties stumble, sympathy is often in short supply. But that's not the whole explanation. Modi's supporters sometimes argue that the mainstream media is incorrigibly prejudiced against their man. Sambit Patra, the BJP's national spokesperson, was heard plaintively complaining that the BJP never had a honeymoon period with the media. This is partisan moaning: understandable but untrue.

The BJP has had enormous support on television. Whole channels have devoted themselves to praising Narendra Modi's "vision" for India: the "*swachh Bharat abhiyan*",

his zeal as an economic reformer, his foreign policy forays, have all elicited wall-to-wall coverage and praise. I'm not arguing that Modi inspires no admiration: he does. I'm merely observing that he elicits no affection or love. He probably wouldn't have it otherwise. During a campaign speech, Modi actually told a Delhi crowd to vote for the BJP because a BJP chief minister would work out of a fear of Modi: "*CM ko dar hoga ki Modi baitha hai...*"

Amit Shah and Narendra Modi would rather inspire awe, admiration and fear than love and affection. And they succeed in this. They win elections because voters admire their ability to get things done and their summary way with people and processes. The trouble with this sort of success is that when failure comes knocking you get gawking onlookers, not concerned citizens.

Contrast this with the way in which the Aam Aadmi Party is regarded by the public. When Arvind Kejriwal grinningly introduced his wife at a rally after the results came in, I could almost hear television's collective communion go "awwwwww!". People like Kejriwal. There are people who loathe him; that goes without saying. But lots of people like him. They thrill to his successes. They feel for his failures. They call him Arvind without thinking twice. To feel for Mr Modi would be an impertinence. And no one, no one, would dare call him Narendra.

This is not to single out Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. Majoritarian right-wing parties are inherently charmless organizations. They spend their time peddling a passive-aggressive resentment of religious minorities, they believe that austerity is economically virtuous, they routinely denounce liberalism's pandering nostrums. Their leaders are admired, hero-worshipped and feared. They are not concerned about being liked, and they aren't. It is why their defeats inspire voyeurism, not empathy.

FEDERAL STATE RELATIONS

HINDU, FEB 12, 2015

For cooperative federalism

The views expressed by Chief Ministers at the maiden meeting of NITI Aayog's Governing Council last weekend, demanding greater freedom to frame their own development plans, vindicate the thought process that went into conceiving the body that has replaced the 60-year-old Planning Commission. Promoting cooperative federalism and giving States greater freedom in designing their development plans were two of the key objectives behind the setting up of the NITI Aayog. Chief Ministers, cutting across party lines, demanded that they be given such freedom, with Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy pointing out that schemes such as Jan Dhan Yojana or Beti Bachao were of little relevance to his State which already boasted of superior metrics in both fields. Similarly, Rajasthan's Chief Minister demanded that the number of Centrally-sponsored schemes be reduced to 10, while Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar wanted such schemes to be dispensed with altogether. If these demands prove something, it is this: there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to development in a diverse country like India. And no longer can development be orchestrated from the Centre alone; it is as much the preserve, prerogative and responsibility of the States. Thus, the NITI Aayog will stop with making recommendations; implementing them will be the responsibility of the States.

An important decision made at the meeting was to constitute a subgroup of Chief Ministers who would study the 66 Centrally-sponsored schemes to assess whether they should be continued, transferred to States or dropped altogether. While doing this assessment, care should be taken to ensure that socially important inclusion schemes are not either downgraded or dropped. There could be examples of schemes that may not have national relevance but have resonance with particular States; these should be identified with due care and alterations should be made only after a consensus is evolved in the Governing Council. In this regard, it is encouraging to note that inclusion of the vulnerable and marginalised sections and redressing identity-based inequalities are at the top of the seven guiding principles for the Aayog as laid out in an e-book published by the government. This should also reassure those who see the body's mandate as promoting a free-market economy which could come at the cost of the less-developed States. Of course, the true test of this government's commitment to inclusive policies will come in the Budget's allocations to social sector schemes. All the lofty ideals of the Aayog will come to naught if the government, forced by fiscal considerations, decides to set aside lower sums for social spending.

STATESMAN, FEB 9, 2015

PM promises states more funds

Exhorting Chief Ministers to bury differences to help India achieve high growth and create jobs, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday promised more funds to states with greater powers on their utilisation, even as he asked them to address issues delaying projects.

Keen to revive investment cycle, Modi at the first Governing Council meeting of the newly-constituted NITI Aayog asked Chief Ministers to personally monitor factors impacting project execution and suggested that an officer be identified in each state to monitor and resolve pending issues.

He offered to transfer some of the 66 centrally sponsored schemes, for which Rs 3,38,562 crore was provided in 2014-15, to states. A sub-group of Chief Ministers would be set up under NITI Aayog to look into rationalisation of these 66 schemes and recommend which ones "to continue, which to transfer to states, and which to cut down".

"We will move away from 'one size fits all' schemes and forge a better match between the schemes and the needs of states," Modi said.

Modi also announced setting up of two more such sub-groups -- one for skill development and creation of jobs within states and the other to create an institutional framework to make 'Swachh Bharat (Clean India)' a continuous initiative.

Identifying poverty elimination as the biggest challenge, he said the new body, which replaced the long-standing socialist era plan body Planning Commission, will forge a model of "co-operative and competitive federalism".

"Forgetting all our differences, let us focus on the cycle of investment, growth, job creation and prosperity," he said at the meeting attended by Chief Ministers and representatives of 31 states and Union Territories, addressing them as 'Team India'

Noting that India cannot advance without all its states advancing in tandem, the Prime

Minister said the idea was to bring up all states together in the spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'.

Later briefing reporters, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that Modi told CMs that "the priorities are growth, investment, jobs, poverty alleviation, decentralisation, efficiency and no delay in execution of projects".

The Prime Minister, Jaitley said, also highlighted that the economic activity really is to take place in states and therefore states have an important role to play.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee skipped the meet, but Bihar Chief Minister Jitan Manjhi, who is facing a political turmoil back home, was present. States like Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh demanded more funds for states, while Kerala sought greater flexibility in central allocations.

Those who attended the meeting included Akhilesh Yadav (Uttar Pradesh), Tarun Gogoi (Assam), Parkash Singh Badal (Punjab), O Panneerselvam (Tamil Nadu), Oommen Chandy (Kerala), Virbhadra Singh (Himachal Pradesh) and N Chandrababu Naidu (Andhra Pradesh), as well as Chief Ministers from BJP-ruled states like Gujarat and Chhattisgarh.

The interaction during the Governing Council meeting was co-ordinated by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, while opening remarks were made by NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya. The Prime Minister is the Chairperson of the new institution.

Noting that projects are often held up for want of timely decisions, Modi asked Chief Ministers "to give personal attention" to factors slowing down projects and asked them to "focus on the cycle of investment, growth, job creation and prosperity".

He also asked states to set up two task forces each to help the country get out of problem of poverty and increase agricultural production.

The Prime Minister called upon Chief Ministers to work with the Centre to forge a model of co-operative federalism where the two work as Team India and "come together to

resolve differences, and chart a common course to progress and prosperity".

Describing the meeting as one that has the potential to bring about historic changes, he said the Governing Council of NITI Aayog would help advance the national cause "as we jointly define it".

He added that he envisioned different states competing with each other in promoting governance initiatives, in a spirit of "co-operative, competitive federalism".

Stating that the world has started looking at India differently, he said "our biggest challenge still is how to eliminate poverty".

Jobs, he said, cannot be created, and poverty cannot be eliminated without growth. "First and foremost we should aim at a high rate of growth."

FINANCE

HINDU, FEB 14, 2015

A budget to transform

Over the past eight months, the government has issued some strong statements on the economy and taken some bold steps aimed at transforming it. As it prepares to present its first real budget we may reflect upon the direction that it should take.

First, we would expect a budget with a focus, one that resists the temptation to spread either allocations or interventions too thin. If quickening growth is the objective, and the government has stated that it is, the budget should address this objective squarely by increasing the allocation for capital formation.

We know that the trajectory of the economy over the past decade is related to the path of public capital formation, notably in infrastructure. To be effective in the context of a significant slowing of growth, however, a substantial hike in public investment would be necessary. This will come up against the programme of fiscal consolidation being pursued. I do not consider it vital to stick to the 4.1 per cent fiscal-deficit target announced for this year. Reports are that this target may have been breached already. But there is a more substantial argument.

In the present state of the economy — when there is excess capacity in manufacturing, adequate stocks of foodgrain and the inflation rate is trending downwards — we have an opportune moment for a public investment-centred fiscal expansion. Tax revenues will rise following the resulting expansion in output and the increased debt incurred to fund the expansion is thereby financed. This dividend has been termed, cheekily but surely, a “fiscal free lunch”. It also suggests that when there is a feed-forward impulse present in the economy, i.e., its current state casts a shadow on its future, fiscal abstinence when the economy is sluggish could actually lead to a worsened fiscal balance in terms of the debt-GDP ratio, for growth would have been lower. Nothing said here detracts from sticking to fiscal consolidation as a desirable long-term objective. It only suggests that its pace must not be forced, but instead calibrated to the state of the economy. Right now a rigid adherence to a targeted fiscal deficit is not optimal. To borrow from Keynes, “the boom ... is the right time for austerity”. However, the fear is that the government may currently be practising the reverse of this maxim. There are reports that faced with the prospect of overshooting the target of 4.1 per cent for the fiscal deficit in the current fiscal year, the Ministry of Finance has advised a reduction of plan expenditure. To do so would be foolhardy. Note that what is being called for is only a temporary deviation from the target for the fiscal deficit. Any fiscal expansion may be reversed as its beneficial effects occur and the economy expands. However, this may take up to three years or so given that growth has slowed for about twice as long.

‘Make in India’

The argument thus far is based on considerations of aggregate demand deficiency. But there are also significant supply-side gains to be had from public capital formation. These

supply-side gains feed into one of the government's major initiatives and also one that is lacking even as it is very important for the country. The first is the idea of 'Make in India'. The second is agriculture, which has so far received less attention from the government than it deserves given its importance.

There is a perception that the 'Make in India' initiative is pitched towards foreign firms. Foreign direct investment (FDI) is important both as a source of funds, foreign exchange and technology, and conditions must be created for a favourable entry of foreign firms, but we can hardly ignore India's entrepreneurs if we are interested in the wide-spreading of prosperity. And, while Indian firms rightly expect a predictable tax regime and freedom from Inspector Raj, they are also hobbled by the lack of adequate infrastructure. This only the government can provide, though not the Central government alone. There is a major role for the State governments in this regard. So long as we are interested not only in economic growth but also in the participation in it by individuals, publicly-provided infrastructure is what is going to make the difference. While Special Economic Zones (SEZ) can be useful, especially for raising exports, and large corporates may push for them, I have in mind the infrastructure needed to service the segment of Indian manufacturing dubbed "unorganised". More recently termed the MSME — micro, small and medium enterprises — sector, this sector produces close to half the manufacturing output, comprises the largest number of production units, employs the largest number of workers, and generates a significant share of exports. What its firms need most is producer services. These range from electricity to waste disposal and assured water supply. These smaller producers do not have the wherewithal to supply these services themselves. On the other hand they would be willing to pay for them.

Agriculture and rural India

For 'Make in India' to progress beyond promise, more than mere legislation is required. An attractive investment climate is made up not only by favourable laws but also by enabling producer services. Among these are also information and advice. There is a strong case for something akin to the agricultural extension service for the MSME sector. It could be housed in the district industries centres, which were instituted nearly 40 years ago but have remained dormant.

A sector of the economy that has not so far received even token attention from the government is agriculture and rural India in general, though technically speaking 'Make in India', can be said to include rural industry. It is not sufficiently well known that in the past decade the real price of food has risen by 25 per cent. This is completely out of line with the experience of the richer economies of the world where the price of food has shown a secular decline. Take China, where the share of food in the household budget is on average much lower than it is in India. As less need be spent on it now, cheaper food expands the demand for manufactures. The general approach in India has been to increase the production of food, but the point actually is to also lower its cost of production. Public capital formation in agriculture has been on the downward trend for about 25 years now, preventing the yield increase necessary for keeping price increase in check. The trend needs to be reversed. Whether in industry or in agriculture, expansion of the

economy's infrastructural base increases productivity, driving growth and enhancing the tax revenue needed to finance the public debt. But more so, infrastructure empowers people more than consumption subsidies do.

Having made a case for greater public capital formation, the issue of which projects to undertake is a real one. There is no question that the choice of projects should be done carefully and the implementation rigorous. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana initiated some years ago would be an ideal vehicle for investment. After all, roads are needed across the country, rural India would be targeted and the overall outlay will be substantial. Only, given India's diverse geographies a flexible approach should be adopted and the States taken on board. Nothing is gained by insisting on one-size-fits-all solutions, a feature that has plagued Central schemes historically.

Financing

The suggestion that the budget be used as the vehicle for expanding the capital base of the country ought also to be seen from the point of view of the mode of financing. The much-vaunted PPP model for expanding infrastructure, in vogue for a decade, has broken down. Also, public sector commercial banks are now undercapitalised having been pressured to lend to long-gestation projects which they are not suited to do.

Once again, some perspective is to be gained from the experience of China where the infrastructure has been built by the state. In general, the importance of public capital in the form of infrastructure for economic growth, not to mention well-being, has been underrated in the discourse on the future of India.

Greater public capital formation would have to be financed. As already argued we may expect at least some part of the increased debt due to the fiscal expansion to finance itself. Two other possibilities are for funds from consumption subsidies to be channelled into public infrastructure and for proceeds from disinvestment to be earmarked similarly. Consumption subsidies other than on food for the poor should be reviewed. The slide in growth after 2008 began as the government chose to privilege consumption subsidies over investment. Do we really need a subsidy for cooking gas which we know to be regressive? The kerosene subsidy is known to abet criminality as the stock is diverted to adulterate transportation fuel. The food subsidy could be trimmed if the public distribution system (PDS) is linked to Aadhaar and the buffer stock reduced substantially. Increasing the foodstock beyond what is necessary is not only costly but also raises the market price, leaving the poor without access to the PDS worse off, thus defeating the very purpose of government intervention. Narendra Modi had promised maximum governance. Fortune, it is said, favours the brave and the budget would be a good place to start.

(The writer may be reached at www.pulaprebalakrishnan.in)

While sticking to fiscal consolidation is a desirable long-term objective, its pace must not be forced, but instead calibrated to the state of the economy. Right now a rigid adherence to

a targeted fiscal deficit is not optimal.

In the present state of the economy, when there is excess capacity in manufacturing, adequate stocks of foodgrain and the inflation rate is trending downwards, there is an opportune moment for

a public investment-centred fiscal expansion

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

BUSINESS STANDARD, FEB 10, 2015

Bank employees to go on strike from February 25-28

IBA had proposed to improve wage hike offer from 12.5% to 13% and said that the 19.5% rise sought in wages by the unions was unacceptable

Following last week's failed negotiations between the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) and the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), the umbrella organisation of bank unions, over wage hike, the latter has decided to go on [strike](#) from February 25 to February 28 seeking revision in wages.

The [UFBU](#) includes All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA), National Confederation of Bank Employees, Bank Employees Federation of India, Indian National Bank Employees Federation, Indian National Bank Officers Congress, National Organisation of Bank Workers, All India Bank Officers Association and National Organisation of Bank Officers.

"Since the increase in offer of 0.5 per cent by [IBA](#) was paltry, inadequate and not satisfactory, UFBU has decided to revive the strike programme. There will be four days' all India bank strike at Public Sector Banks (PSBs) from February 25-28," said UFBU Gujarat chapter convener Ajay Badani, who is also the general secretary of SBI Employees' Union.

IBA had proposed to improve wage hike offer from 12.5 per cent to 13 per cent and said that the 19.5 per cent rise sought in wages by the unions was unacceptable because of the strenuous financial performance of the banks.

Badani, in a press meet organised here on Monday, said "Bank employees are not responsible for rising Non Performing Assets (NPAs). Top executives of the bank and political pressure are putting stress on NPAs. We seek 19.5 per cent revision in wage in view of increased volume of work and manpower shortage."

He further alleged that Corporate entities are responsible for rising [NPAs](#) of Public Sector Banks for which bank staff are being made to suffer.

The proposed strike, as per UBFU, is expected to affect transactions worth Rs 12,000 crore in public sector banks in Gujarat. UFBU said that if negotiations fail further, the unions would go on indefinite strike from

GOVERNORS

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 13, 2015

Governors' role is not diminished if they act as per Constitution: Pranab

President [Pranab Mukherjee](#) on Thursday said that the authority Governors/Lt. Governors exercise is based on a moral premise and as long as the exercise of that authority is confined to the boundaries of the Constitution, he did not see the possibility of any diminution of their role.

Speaking at the concluding session of the 46th conference of Governors at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Mukherjee said Governors and Lieutenant Governors have an important role to play in making cooperative federalism a reality. They function as sentinels of the Constitution and a “live link to the Union” and have an important role to play in strengthening the partnership between Centre and states, he said. The conference was attended by 21 Governors and two L-Gs.

Mukherjee appreciated the Union Home Minister's suggestion to actively involve Governors in the internal security related apparatus and requested him to consider convening separate meetings with groups of Governors having similar problems like those from northeastern states, coastal states, states with international borders and Maoism-affected states. He also suggested that the Defence Minister may involve Governors of states along an international border in a focused interaction on security issues.

Mukherjee said he is happy that as per the Prime Minister's directions, eight Union ministers, including cabinet ministers and ministers of state, will tour the Northeast every

fortnight to review work related to their departments. He expressed the wish that Governors of eastern states, specially those in the northeast, should become active participants of the Government's 'Act East' policy and requested the External Affairs Minister to consider convening a separate meeting with these Governors to sensitize them on the finer aspects of this policy.

Stressing the role of education in transforming the country, he urged the PM to examine the possibility of progressively increasing spending on education from 3.8 per cent of GDP to 6 per cent.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HINDU, FEB 14, 2015

India and the CTBT

India's past with the treaty to ban all nuclear tests in all places for all time is well known. Some might characterise it as leadership defaulted or, more optimistically, merely delayed. A lot has changed for India since the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for signature in 1996, and the same is true for the treaty itself — enough to prompt fresh thinking about some renewed engagement.

India did not support the treaty in 1996 — and still does not — but it had been very supportive during negotiations. The roots of that exuberance can be traced to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's famous initiative in 1954 for a "standstill agreement" on nuclear testing. His intervention came at a time when the U.S. and the Soviet Union were detonating powerful nuclear weapons with increasing frequency. Nehru played an important role in building international momentum for the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty, which India joined. This treaty significantly reduced global levels of fallout, but did little to constrain the nuclear arms race. The CTBT was created as a result.

It has been hard in recent years to discern a public debate on the CTBT in India. This is tragic in the very country that made the path-breaking call for the "standstill agreement"; has been observing a unilateral moratorium since 1998; is a champion of nuclear disarmament; and, in the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "will continue to contribute to the strengthening of the global non-proliferation efforts." For all of its efforts in galvanising the creation of an effective international verification system, India is currently unable to derive either the political or the technical benefits from it. But 183 other countries do.

The CTBT with its 183 signatories and 163 ratifications is one of the most widely supported arms-control treaties. This near universal support is due to the treaty's non-discriminatory nature, where everyone has the same obligation never to conduct a nuclear explosion. As another mark of progress, the prohibition against testing has emerged as an established global political and behavioural norm. The international condemnation of North Korea as the only country that has conducted nuclear tests in this millennium is a vivid illustration.

After each of the North Korean nuclear tests, all CTBT State Signatories received the same high-quality information about the location, magnitude, depth and time of the event within hours of detection by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation's (CTBTO) system of monitoring stations.

CTBTO has evolved from a mere blueprint to the custodian of the world's largest and most sophisticated multilateral verification system. Over 300 stations in 89 countries have been built to monitor for signs of nuclear explosions around the globe and round the clock. The International Monitoring System (IMS) monitors the Earth's crust, listens in

the atmosphere and in the oceans and sniffs the air for traces of radioactivity. While scanning the globe for signs of a nuclear test, this monitoring system produces data that have many spin-off applications, from disaster early warning to scientific research on the Earth's inner structures, climate change or meteors, to name just a few of the potential uses.

Nuclear safety

CTBTO is also making contributions to the nuclear safety field. After the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident, CTBTO data provided timely information on the radioactive emissions from the crippled plant and their global dispersion.

In spite of all these achievements, the CTBT has yet to become global law due to its demanding entry into force clause, which requires the signature and ratification of all 44 countries listed as nuclear technology capable. At present, eight of those countries are yet to join: India, Pakistan and North Korea are the only non-signatories from this list.

Before India even signs the CTBT, it can reacquaint itself with today's global nuclear test ban, while making an important contribution to the multilateral verification system. Radionuclide stations, which "sniff out" radioactive particles and noble gases, are the only means to confirm a nuclear explosion. In particular, the radionuclide station still sought for India to host is vital to finishing the now 90 per cent complete IMS, which is already highly effective in detecting nuclear explosions.

The IMS has also facilitated a rich international exchange of data and expertise and boosted technological advancements pertaining to infrasound and noble gas monitoring. Additionally, the CTBTO has an active programme of engagement with the international scientific community who can tap into a wealth of data generated by the IMS, and civil and scientific applications are booming. India should be part of this.

Science should support diplomacy. Today, a first step toward reengagement would be for relevant scientific and other government institutions to initiate contact with the CTBTO for the purpose of beginning scientific cooperation. This could eventually lead to India participating in the international exchange of data from the monitoring stations and would be an important first step to establishing familiarity and trust.

Taking these initial steps within the scientific context is wholly consistent with India's standing in the 21st century as it looks to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. Scientific cooperation is crucial for sustainable dialogue. Interactions between scientists serve to promote cross-border exchanges and can become a precursor for greater engagement. One avenue for engagement takes place this June in Vienna at the CTBT: the Science and Technology Conference 2015, which is the world's largest scientific forum on nuclear-test-ban verification and its other benefits. Encouragingly, Indian scientists attended the last conference and I look forward to welcoming more this year.

India's future with the CTBT is still unwritten. Leadership until now may have been delayed, but there are opportunities for it to be reengaged and renewed.

(Courtesy: UN Information Centre for India and Bhutan)

(Lassina Zerbo is Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), based in Vienna, Austria.)

India's future with the CTBT is still unwritten. Leadership until now may have been delayed, but there are opportunities for it to be reengaged and renewed

JUDICIARY

INDIAN EXPRESS, FEB 13, 2015

Next CJI: Lack of governance choking Indian justice delivery system

Utkarsh Anand

Senior Supreme Court judge Justice [T S Thakur](#), who is due to take over as the Chief Justice of India later this year, on Thursday blamed “lack of governance” and “officials’ inability to take decisions” as prime reasons behind the deluge of cases choking the justice delivery system.

Pointing out that the government of India was a party in most cases pending across the courts in the country, Justice Thakur said that it was neither a good sign nor a good policy of the government to drag all sorts of disputes to the courts.

“Courts are flooded with litigation due to officials’ inability to take decisions. Large number of cases involving government as one of the parties is not a good sign. It is also not a good policy of the government to drag disputes to courts...it shows there is no proper screening of cases by the government,” he said, while delivering a lecture at Asia-Pacific International Summit on Mediation in New Delhi.

Critical of the executive action, Justice Thakur said that the government required to be responsive to time and should also promote dispute resolution mechanism that was essential to avoid litigation in courts.

“A lot of government disputes can be easily resolved via mediation. Government needs to be responsive to time. Large cases against govt shows lack of governance...large cases coming to courts shows the faith people have in the judiciary,” added the judge.

Stating that the Supreme Court was not a “promotion club” PIL and that such cases had to be entertained to protect fundamental rights of the people, Justice Thakur maintained that there was an imperative need to take away the extra burden on judiciary by promoting alternate dispute resolution like mediation.

He said that mediation and other methods of out-of-court settlements had to be promoted in India as now, the top court of the country was compelled to spend a lot of time on cases involving bounced cheques and anticipatory bail.

Justice J S Khehar, who is slated to become the CJI in January 2017, also spoke during the summit, and underlined the necessity of creating an atmosphere as well as adequate infrastructure to promote mediation as a preferable, cost effective and timely mechanism to resolve disputes. He said that India required to adopt a peculiar model of alternate dispute resolution mechanism owing to its specific cultural traits and a lot of deliberation must take place to put in place a system.

POLICE

DECCAN HERALD, FEB 9, 2015

8-hour shift may up cops' productivity

A government-sponsored study lays bare the abysmal working conditions of policemen in our country.

Not only do police personnel have to put in “inordinately long hours” at work daily but also they rarely get to take their weekly off, the report “National Requirement of Manpower for 8-Hour Shifts in Police Stations” points out.

The overwhelming majority of police officials interviewed for the study reported that their staff worked for 11 hours or more each day with a significant number even claiming that staff sometimes put in over 14 hours daily.

Nearly 75 per cent claimed they did not get to take their weekly off. On the rare occasion they did take their weekly off, over 80 per cent said they were recalled for duty to deal with some law and order problem or crisis. The study underscores the fact that our police personnel are grossly overworked and not getting the rest and relaxation they need.

This is of grave concern not only because adequate rest is essential for the health and well-being of all living beings but also, policing in particular is high stress work, which demands maximum alertness from the personnel.

How can we expect our policemen to perform efficiently when they are denied rest and recreation? Policemen are involved in a mounting number of cases of road rage and domestic violence which can be attributed to stress and anxiety.

India's police force is beset with problems that have contributed to low morale and efficiency of its personnel. The country has one of the lowest police-population ratios of 131.1 officers per one lakh population, against the United Nations' norm of 222.

It is this shortage of personnel that results in the staff having to work round the clock without weekly offs or vacations. Successive governments have promised grandly to implement police reforms. However, little has been done in this regard. Working conditions for police have shown no improvement over the decades.

It is imperative that the government step up recruitment of police personnel especially at the level of constables and head constables. Importantly, the shift system must be implemented so that cops work for only eight hours per day. Often, constables are forced to do the personal work of their seniors such as picking up the latter's children from school or cleaning their houses and so on. Freeing them from such work will result in better use of available manpower at the workplace. Steps to reduce the stress of our cops will go a long way in improving the productivity of our police force.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 14, 2015

Pranab Mukherjee appoints Arvind Kejriwal as Delhi Chief Minister

A Home Ministry statement said the President appointed Kejriwal as the Chief Minister of Delhi with effect from the date he is sworn in.

NEW DELHI: President [Pranab Mukherjee](#) tonight appointed [Arvind Kejriwal](#) as Chief Minister of Delhi along with six cabinet ministers.

A Home Ministry statement said the President appointed Kejriwal as the Chief Minister of Delhi with effect from the date he is sworn in.

"The President, on the advise of the Chief Minister, has also appointed Manish Sisodia, Asim Ahmed Khan, Sandeep Kumar, Satyendar Jain, Gopal Rai and Jitender Singh Tomar as ministers of Delhi," the statement said.

Earlier, the President revoked the order issued on February 16, 2014 under article 239AB of the Constitution imposing central rule in Delhi to pave the way for installation of an elected government.

In the recently held Delhi assembly elections, Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party ([AAP](#)) scored a historic victory sweeping 67 of the 70 seats.

Kejriwal is set to take oath as chief minister along with his cabinet colleagues tomorrow at Ramlila Maidan, the the protest venue of the anti-graft campaigners over three years ago.

This will be his second term as [Delhi chief minister](#) after he resigned last February following a 49-day stint in government in the national capital with the support of Congress.

BUSINESS LINE, FEB 11, 2015

Uncommon victory

The AAP's remarkable win in Delhi is not a referendum on Modi. But it does underscore the need to broadbase development

It would be unfair to read the remarkable outcome of the Delhi Assembly poll as a mere rejection of Narendra Modi's brand of development, as some of the opposition parties — with the notable exception of the Aam Aadmi Party itself — have been quick to claim. And while there was a huge consolidation of the Opposition vote, the AAP's astounding victory was much more than a mere result of this. The numbers tell their tale. The AAP

— virtually written off by many analysts nine months ago after the BJP's resounding win in the parliamentary election — won 67 out of 70 seats, with a staggering 54.3 per cent share of the popular vote. The BJP, which won all seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi nine months ago, had actually 'won' 57 of the 70 Assembly segments, with 46.4 per cent of the popular vote. This time around, its vote share has slid to 32.2 per cent. This may appear as a sharp fall, but when compared to the 2013 Assembly poll result (when BJP won 32 seats), its vote share has declined by just around 1 percentage point. Apart from illustrating the pitfalls of our first-past-the-post system, what the popular vote indicates is that while the BJP may have retained its core base, the AAP has managed to wrest support across all caste, community, economic and gender divides.

This overwhelming faith reposed on the AAP is likely to be its greatest challenge going forward. While some of its election promises, such as passing the Delhi Jan Lokpal Bill or the Swaraj Act, may be easy to keep, given its legislative dominance, others, such as halving the electricity bills of consumers, giving every household 700 litres of water free every day, and providing free wi-fi throughout Delhi, raise questions about its ability — or even intent — to keep Delhi's finances in order. They evoke disturbing memories of past attempts at state-led welfarism, most of which failed to achieve their stated objectives while squandering scarce resources.

How, then, should we read these results? Yes, the BJP made tactical blunders — paratrooping Kiran Bedi as the chief ministerial candidate at the last minute and placing an exaggerated faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's larger-than-life image. These detracted from local issues such as water, power, accessible healthcare and education, and women's safety, which the AAP focussed upon. But it is not the specific issues which the AAP raised that are important as much as the pain points that it managed to touch. Whether it is access to education or better healthcare facilities or even the creation of a unified transit authority to tackle Delhi's transportation woes, the AAP's election manifesto points to the thinness of our development, and the sharp divide between those who are already enjoying the benefits of growth and those who aspire to them. This is the real meaning of the mandate that our political class needs to take on board.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated February 11, 2015)

DECCAN HERALD, FEB 12, 2015

AAP, an option in 2019

Kuldip Nayar

Massive mandate: The party will have to remain focused on values which constitute the basic structure of our constitution.

It is, indeed, instructive to analyse why the ruling BJP was decimated at the polls in Delhi. But the more important point to know is how the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has

emerged with a bang: 67 seats in a house of 70! The BJP is down to just three from the 32 it had won in the December 2013 assembly election.

Who's the AAP? It is a secular, left-of-the-centre party which may become an alternative in the country, replacing the Congress which is languishing. Some time ago, a set of motivated people came from different fields and joined Gandhian Anna Hazare in his campaign for the appointment of Lokpal (ombudsman) in order to fight corruption at high places. The movement engulfed the entire country in no time because the campaign had permeated all segments of the society.

How the government beguiled Hazare and his associates to circumvent its undertaking to appoint an ombudsman is another story. Yet, there is no doubt that his movement attracted many idealists in the society at that time.

And Arvind Kejriwal was one of them. He was among the many who aspired for a clean and transparent polity. Although the movement was suppressed, it never allowed the idealism go out of the public gaze. That was when the AAP was born, contested the election and was briefly in power.

But how and why the AAP got more attention this time was because the people were sick and tired of the two main political parties, the Congress and the BJP.

The AAP, despite facing the apathy of the public, stuck to its path and managed to catch the imagination of the people once again to be voted to power with an unprecedented majority.

Much will now depend on Kejriwal and his associates and how they pursue the ideals they have adumbrated. The Delhi electorate has pinned its hope in AAP because the people believed that the party can deliver.

The two main political parties do not evoke optimism and both the Congress and the BJP look like the relics of the past. People are looking for an alternative and the Delhi election has thrown open one such opportunity.

It is, however, too early to think that the politics of values, which goaded the people to participate in the freedom movement, can return.

Whether or not the AAP leaders realise it, they have become the centre of attention as well as hope.

They can become an option at the centre in the next Lok Sabha elections in 2019. But it will be a different journey and, to traverse it, the AAP will have to remain focused on values which constitute the basic structure of our constitution.

True, the Delhi election was not a referendum on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. But it was the BJP that had made it by putting his photos on every bit of publicity material it released.

The many crores of rupees advertisements which the party released in newspapers and on hoardings displayed in Delhi had the photo of Modi along with Kiran Bedi who was seeking election.

Nonetheless, it would be too simplistic to believe that the induction of Kiran Bedi as the chief ministerial candidate was the cause of the BJP's defeat. Perhaps, it made some difference.

But the vote was against the BJP and its ideology of Hindutva. The party still does not want to face the fact that the spell of Modi has waned. The BJP itself looks jaded and stuck in the old mould of religious superiority.

The voters swung towards them last time not because of their ideology but because they were promised development, the economic betterment of the people. Almost 10 months of the Modi government at the Centre has made little difference to the life of an ordinary man on the street.

BJP, Cong must introspect

Both the BJP and the Congress, which did not win a single seat in the Delhi election, must introspect hard and change their policies.

The ideology of Hindutva does not sell in a society which is pluralistic if the BJP were to analyse the causes of its defeat. The vandalism of churches is suspected to be the handiwork of extremists in the party.

The campaigns like “ghar wapsi” or the projection of Nathuram Godse, who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi, do not go down well in a country that takes pride in being secular.

The Congress, stuck in dynastic politics, has little hope of a revival. The party was a movement and had all its qualities. Today, it is distant from the people. The rout of both the Congress and the BJP should make them go back to the drawing boards.

If they do that honestly they would realise that they are distant from the ground realities. Even if they do not move left, they have to find a solution to poverty and unemployment. Modi’s free enterprise has not given any dividends so far. There is no running away from the reality that one third of the people are living below the poverty line.

The RSS, the BJP’s ideologue, takes pride in saying that the rule of Hindus has returned after many decades. This is not a solution but the problem. All segments of society should be associated with the development. One, however, feels that the minorities are being left out purposely.

India, as Mahatma Gandhi said, is a bouquet of flowers. He was emphasising the plurality of the society. The constitution assures equality to all before the law, whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians.

But it is a pity that we are going away from that principle. The sooner we retrieve ourselves to that basic requirement, the lesser arduous would our journey be towards a democratic, secular and socialist polity.

TELEGRAPH, FEB 14, 2014

Temples of popularity

- People and their leaders are made of the same clay Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

It sounds trite but is true. Nothing succeeds like success. If the Aam Aadmi Party hadn't swept Delhi's electoral board, we would have heard a great deal about personality cults, dissidents' grievances, shady donors and suspected Indian Mujahedeen links. The breach with Anna Hazare and the fiasco of Arvind Kejriwal's 49-day ministry last year would have been resuscitated in gory detail. But given the outcome, it's the Bharatiya Janata Party that is being roasted for daring to slander the victorious and therefore virtuous people's darling while an occasional contemptuous aside reminds everyone that an etiolated Congress lost even more resoundingly.

Two lessons stand out in these topsy-turvy times when the most frequently used words are "introspect" and "tsunami". If we introspect the two tsunamis of Barack Obama's visit

and the Delhi election, the signs are that under the elaborate trappings of modern diplomacy and Westminster democracy, India is returning to its roots. Both events signify how much closer the style and content of politics, whether by the BJP or AAP, has moved to the soil of India. The first lesson within that trend is that if Narendra Modi's fawning on Obama didn't cost the BJP the election, it should have done. But that's a personal view. The mass of those who heard Modi's speech in Hindi from Hyderabad House - which I found demeaning and sycophantic - may have gloated on how kindly the Great White Chief treats the prime minister. They may have been flattered that Obama allowed Modi to use his first name and even indulge in the familiarity of jokes and banter.

Second, I find myself in agreement for once with what is called the "Hindu Right", though Right and Left are meaningless where bully boys are concerned. But I do agree the upsurge of *Hindutva* zealotry and what some of this newspaper's readers might deplore as Modi's deafening silence had nothing to do with the BJP's decimation. Far from being a liability, muted *Hindutva* propaganda is the party's strongest selling point with hundreds of millions of Indians whom Macaulay's deracinating hand left untouched. With his finger on the public pulse, Modi was astute enough to know that only an insignificant minority of urban, educated middle- to upper middle-class professionals disapproved of *ghar wapsi* or churches being desecrated. They are not his primary constituents. Neither are Muslims. The election results indicated no dramatic rejection of the Modi BJP creed.

The party's failure - and this was indeed a major failure - lay in not winning over voters who were disillusioned with a lacklustre Congress. The Congress's vote share plummeted from about 24 per cent in December 2013 to 9.7 per cent. Instead of thronging the lotus, malcontents flocked to the AAP's broom, lured by the appeal of a new star on the horizon and the promise of long-standing complaints being addressed. Yet, despite the 70-point programme's attractive promises, the AAP isn't above identity politics either. Given the education and income levels of most voters, no political party can afford to be. According to the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Baniyas account for about six per cent of Delhi voters. Hence Kejriwal's proud "*Main baniya hun aur dhandha samajhta hun!*" at a traders' rally in Nehru Place when he promised to end harassment raids in the name of value added tax. Predictably, the 70-point programme promises not only to reduce VAT but to drastically simplify the collection procedure.

Modi and Kejriwal are alike in having a thorough grasp of the dynamics of the society they work with. Both know that a comment like Jawaharlal Nehru's "any idea of a personal God seems very odd to me" would immediately alienate hordes of potential supporters. Neither would dream of denouncing "the spectacle of organized religion" as signifying "blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition, exploitation and the preservation of vested interests". If Nehru aspired to reinvent the Indian nation in his own rational, secular image, Modi and Kejriwal endear themselves to voters by playing on the sentiments that have provided emotional sustenance through the ages.

It's a choice today's Congress probably hasn't the imagination even to understand, leave alone grapple with. Individual Congressmen are culturally and instinctively no different from their peers in other camps. But, institutionally, the party is still a prisoner of the Victorian values of the Indian National Congress and of the socialist secular mantra that was foisted on it later. Congressmen are forced to pretend to serve socialism in a rampantly cut-corners-and-get-rich-quick society that is proud of there being more multimillionaires in India than in Australia, Russia and France. They must also feign secularism in a world where, increasingly, nothing moves without a nod from temple or mosque.

Kejriwal wouldn't have been such a hit if ordinary folk who are neither socialist nor secular hadn't identified with him. The resounding "Bharat *mata ki jai!*" with which he ends his speeches is no mere formality. Modi doesn't have a monopoly of the holy Ganga: Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, the new deputy chief minister, have also publicly worshipped on its banks. If Modi offered *puja* and sandalwood at Kathmandu's Pashupatinath temple, Kejriwal celebrated Durga Puja in Delhi's Karol Bagh. Saffron and *sadhus* are no longer the BJP's exclusive prerogative. Kejriwal can match Modi's Sakshi Maharaj with his very own Cheena Maharaj. "Cheena Ji Maharaj is like our guru," he announced recently. "With his *ashirvad*, we can take this organization forward." The *maharaj* has the added advantage of being a Valmiki (Bhangi), the community which traditionally supplies the capital's sweepers. Kejriwal's courtship of Valmikis yielded dividends last year when the AAP won nine of Delhi's 12 reserved seats. He repaid the debt by including two Valmikis - including a woman - in his seven-member ministry. He called it history in the making. And, indeed, it was. This time the AAP won all 12 reserved seats, justifying Kejriwal's boast that only his organization gives respect to the lowest.

Cheena Maharaj is an invaluable ally. He is priest of the temple for Valmikis Birla built a century ago in Mandir Marg. Apparently, the temple once refused to allow Mayavati to cross its threshold. But one can see pictures on the internet of Cheena Maharaj performing *puja* there for Kejriwal sitting cross-legged beside him. If the *maharaj* is to be believed, he also selected the broom as the AAP's election symbol out of three designs Kejriwal produced. He thought it would be an effective rallying symbol for the Valmiki community.

Churchill's prediction that "India will fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of the Middle Ages" probably revealed more about his wish than about India. Churchill also spoke of Brahmins who practised rigorous untouchability and then chopped logic with John Stuart Mill or pleaded the rights of man with Jean Jacques Rousseau. The world's biggest democracy is somewhat like that - sustained by ancient rites in its modern pursuits. The vigour with which even radio programmes broadcast astrological forecasts today recalls those forgotten Press Commission reports urging newspapers to encourage a scientific temper by not pandering to primitive yearnings in readers.

The temple near Rajkot where Bharat Mata was expected to yield her throne to Modi is symptomatic of the national mood. The plan enjoys popular and ministerial support. Reports indicate there's a similar temple in Uttar Pradesh. Despite Modi's tweeted disapproval when the media reported the existence of these structures, they reveal the public temper that produces and shapes populist politicians. It should occasion no surprise if Kejriwal now finds a place in the Valmiki pantheon. The people and their leaders are made of the same clay.

HINDU, FEB 11, 2015

Paisa, power and politics

VIDYA VENKAT

The resounding victory of the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi shows why it is time political parties adopted accountability measures for party funding

Point a finger at someone else and three fingers point back at you. That is what seems to be the case with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accusing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of sourcing party funding through 'hawala' sources during the fag end of the Delhi election campaign.

The BJP has not declared the contributions made to its party funds above the Rs. 20,000 limit, as required, to the Election Commission of India for the Financial Year 2013-14. And the party is the only national party to not have submitted this report.

Whether the allegations made by the BJP against the AAP before the polls are genuine or not will have to be investigated in the interest of accountability. But more important, the resurfacing of the larger issue of opacity in electoral and party financing on the national stage before a significant electoral contest is an opportunity to address an issue in which political parties have been mostly evading responsibility.

The resounding victory of the AAP in the Delhi Assembly elections shows why it is high time that political parties adopt concrete financial accountability measures for party funding. It is well known that the AAP made a genuine effort at transparently crowdsourcing election funds — seeking donations online, through dinner parties and *chai pe charcha* meetings — which no other party contesting in Delhi seems to have adopted. Pankaj Gupta, national secretary of the AAP, who also raised funds for the party, told *The Hindu* that though they had set the Rs. 30 crore target for the 2015 elections, they were able to raise only about Rs. 20 crore. “We were able to manage our election campaigns this time due to the spirit of volunteerism,” he said. The party adopted a number of cost-cutting measures with volunteers refusing payment for their work, not using television or print advertisements as they cost more money, and instead using

autorickshaw posters and hand-held banners to spread campaign messages. AAP volunteers turned into “human banners” standing for hours atop bridges and flyovers holding 40 feet by 10 feet banners.

AAP spokesperson Yogendra Yadav is critical of the current obsession with the question of ceiling and prescriptions to limit how much can be spent during elections. Such limits encouraged under-reporting of expenses, he says, adding that the real problem is not that some people spend too much and therefore they win. Beyond a point, spending more doesn't mean you win. The real challenge is unless you spend a certain minimum amount you simply won't be in the race. And that minimum has gone up over the years, compromising the democratic process, he said.

Apathy towards accountability

When the Central Information Commission (CIC) issued an order to six major national parties asking them to open up to Right to Information (RTI) queries, none of the parties, including the ruling BJP now pointing fingers at the AAP, implemented the order. In November 2014, when the CIC summoned political parties to question them why they hadn't implemented its earlier order asking six major political parties to implement the RTI Act, none of the six major parties turned up for the hearing. Although the RTI Act does provide protection to concerned parties from having to reveal information that would compromise their competitiveness, political parties have resisted implementing the CIC's order citing the possibility of interference in their internal decision-making processes.

It is also striking that not a single person has been convicted for violating the expenditure norms set up by the Election Commission of India. “Party candidates are even known to lie in their affidavits submitted to the ECI,” Jagdeep Chhokar, founding member of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), said. He added that only during the validity period of the EC notification is spending by candidates on election expenditure demanded for reporting, whereas parties actually start spending money on campaigns much before that.

This is why the EC needs to be more proactive in cracking down on candidates and parties that spend extravagantly before elections. Former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Navin Chawla told *The Hindu* that most candidates exceeded the statutory limits when it came to election spending. Nothing should stop the EC from going to court if they have evidence of excessive spending by candidates or parties. Election observers can file cases against candidates. He also recommended state funding of elections as a

panacea for current ills. Though the idea of state funding for elections has been recommended by several government-appointed committees including the Indrajit Gupta Committee in 1998 which had set up a reimbursement model, these have not taken off.

Also, what the Delhi election campaign and the AAP experiment have brought to light is that given the enthusiasm for electoral participation in India, many people are also willing to donate to parties, though this cannot of course account for a substantial source of income. People who want the party of their choice to win should also be willing to come forward to donate to it.

But the most pertinent question to be raised in the light of this election is whether more money necessarily means more votes. It is well established that only candidates who are wealthy typically enter the electoral arena in India. This is borne out by data analysed using candidate affidavits submitted to the Election Commission by ADR. In fact, a comparison of the average assets of MLAs from 2013 recontesting in the 2015 Delhi elections shows that both the BJP (31) and Congress (8) MLAs were far more wealthy in comparison to AAP MLAs (21), holding assets above Rs. 10 crore, against AAP MLAs average assets of about Rs. 1 crore. This is not to say that the AAP does not have crorepatris among its ranks, but that many of the BJP and Congress MLAs were far better placed financially.

In his recently released book *An Undocumented Wonder: The Making of the Great Indian Election*, former CEC S.Y. Quraishi narrates the story of Baikunth Bhai Mehta who contested the 1935 elections to the Maharashtra Assembly without spending any money on the campaign, due to a condition imposed upon him by Mahatma Gandhi. Mehta followed the advice of Gandhi both in letter and in spirit and went on to win the election. He won without himself having had a campaign financier.

But that was of course in 1935. But 80 years since, will the *aam aadmi* still vote to power a candidate or a party that does not have wealth to flaunt? With Delhi witnessing a fledgling party with limited resources pitted against a well-funded and well-entrenched national party on the election battleground, Tuesday's verdict has provided us the answer.

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Tuesday's verdict has provided us the answer to whether the *aam aadmi* would vote to power a candidate or a party without wealth to flaunt

RELIGION

DECCAN HERALD, FEB 10, 2015

How secular is Secular India?

Faizan Mustafa

Some Constituent Assembly members wanted to begin the Constitution preamble by invoking God.

India is a secular country with religion occupying the central stage. It is said that political structure of secularism is irrelevant and out of place in societies like India where religions are 'totalising' in nature. India's failure in erecting United States' like wall of separation between religion and state was the first blunder of our republic. The Republic Day advertisement of original preamble and subsequent statement by the Shiv Sena have revived the secularism debate in India. The controversy gives us an opportunity to critically examine state of our so called secular polity. India was far more secular without word secular in our preamble as with every passing year it is becoming less and less secular after the formal declaration in 1976.

Secularism is understood to be at the core of modernity. The narrative of secularisation is typically recounted as a story of progress and gradual emancipation from religion through the exercise of reason in the wake of the destructive and terrible sectarian wars that overtook Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. The doctrine of secularism got institutionalised with the historic separation of Church and State by 19th century and eventually became a global norm through colonialism.

We adopted secularism but our state is just overtly religion-neutral and equally promotes all religions. Some members in the Constituent Assembly indeed wanted to begin the preamble of the Constitution by invoking God with the phrase "in the name of God". Finally the matter was put to vote and strangely God lost in religious India. But though God is not there in the Constitution, God is everywhere. It is disgusting to note that modern, democratic and secular Indian state and its leaders have been trying their best to revive the old traditions of state- temple/mosque relationship. As a result, secular Indian state is fast becoming true defender of faith. If there was any doubt in it, extreme right's rhetorics of last eight months give ample indications that Hinduism may soon become the de facto religion of the state.

Moreover, even in the Constitution, by not viewing religion as purely private matter, framers had themselves placed it in the public domain and now our state is expected to remain involved in variety of ways with religion. Serious concerns have been expressed about the rising importance/revival of religion in the public space in India. The failure of our experiment with secularism will be the greatest tragedy of the 21st century. The economic prosperity of post liberalised economy is bringing with it what may be called as

'rush hour of Gods' as we are helplessly observing the proliferation of new expressions of religiosity.

The level of religiosity in the country has gone up at least by 30 per cent. One major indicator of rising religiosity is the unprecedented rise in pilgrimages. Pilgrimages today account for more than 50 per cent of all package tours. Minimum 200 to 300 million Indians of various religious persuasions go for pilgrimages to various holy places every year. Even the Supreme Court did not see any wrong if some small amount is spent by the government in giving subsidy to Indian Muslims going for the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

State is today spending huge amounts on pilgrimage. The Union government spent about Rs 100 million for the infrastructure development for the Amaranath Yatra route. With huge Central government grants, states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir are setting up new 'pilgrimage circuits.' The number of registered religious buildings in cosmopolitan Delhi grew from a mere 560 in 1980 to 2500 in 2013, with similar trends reported from other parts of the country. India has more than three million places of worship.

Rising tide of religiosity

One may not be against this rising tide of religiosity. But what really frustrates is the resurgence which is taking place not against the grain of secularism but because of our secularism. Indian state has completely forgotten the true meaning of secularism and wants to have very close alliance with religions. No exact figures are available as to the exact amount of funds allocated every year by the various states of secular India.

The BJP government of Rajasthan in its last tenure gave Rs 260 million for temple renovations and training of Hindu priests. The Congress government of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh was not far behind as it allocated Rs 600 million for the welfare of priests. The Tamil Nadu government had enhanced temple renovation grants from Rs 5 million to Rs 30 million. The Gujarat government under Narendra Modi could not be far behind and therefore no one should be surprised to know that Hindu priests are on the payroll of the state. Muslims have also got huge financial support from the state and similar salary packages are given to imams. The BJP government in Madhya Pradesh is also paying salaries of imams and priests and sponsors old people's trips to Ajmer and other religious sites.

The Supreme Court also contributed to this state of affairs as it did not consider the Shiv Sena's promise of "establishing first Hindu state in Maharashtra" an appeal in name of religion. Secularism is truly based on the idea of distinct religious and worldly affairs, it indeed constitutes these two distinct spheres along the lines of the public and private distinction that has been so central to modernity, with religion being consigned to the "private" affair. Ideally, this clear cut differentiation should lead to eventual emancipation from, and therefore, the decline of religion. Will this happen at least at the level of state?

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, FEB 14, 2015

Now, a 'common man' can have a street named after him in Delhi!

"As per this plan, people can buy name tags of say a park, street, school, community centre, hospitals after their grandfather or anyone whom they think deserves the honour due to their work in the past," a senior NDMC official said.

NEW DELHI: Residents of north [Delhi](#) can now buy name tags of a public place or property in return for its maintenance.

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation in a special meeting of the House chaired by the Leader of the House [Meera Aggarwal](#) approved the proposal during its budget finalisation today but the option comes with a few riders.

"As per this plan, people can buy name tags of say a park, street, school, community centre, hospitals after their grandfather or anyone whom they think deserves the honour due to their work in the past," a senior [NDMC](#) official said.

But, the idea would first have to be cleared by the NDMC's Naming Committee, which would weigh in the merit of the proposed names before putting the seal on it.

According to the municipal rule, the proposal is first examined on a zonal-level by its ward committee and then it comes under the Naming Committee, headed by the Mayor.

The Standing Committee then tables it in its meet and the final approval is given by the municipal House.

"So, it is not that we are allowing anybody to name anything after anybody. There is a due process. Just because, someone can pay for naming, doesn't mean that we will allow it," Chairman of NDMC's Standing Committee Mohan Bhardwaj said.

"There is a procedure in getting a place or property named. And, the merit of the proposal would be analysed and examined on social and moral grounds by the Naming Committee before giving any approval," he said.

The idea also was to generate additional revenue, the official said.

"We realised that apart from places and properties being named after famous and eminent people, common people could also get named as per their choice to bring in extra revenues.

"It is like people paying extra to get a [VIP car number](#). And the earning could be used in maintaining such properties," he said.

Congress councillor and Leader of Opposition Mukesh Goel had opposed the move earlier as "inappropriate" and "illogical".

The budget proposal in November 19 last year had said that "the Naming Committee invariably finds itself politically and morally on wrong foot to recommend a name after which a street or park is to be named".

The House today also rejected all proposed new taxes and hike in old ones. It also approved Rs 6 crore for 'Swachh Bharat' campaign in its areas.

WOMEN

TELEGRAPH, FEB 10, 2015

The woman's retreat

- What is the function of laws against domestic violence?

Bhaswati Chakravorty

It is not as if people do not know the law. Sometime in July last year, the landlady of a two-room tenement glanced across the yard to see the man of the house dragging his wife by the hair from the kitchen to the outer room, while continuously clubbing her back - from which her blouse now hung in tatters - with the wooden stand of a *bonti*. He was drunk in the middle of the morning and ceaseless in his abuse. The bleeding woman was desperately trying not to make a sound. The landlady immediately shouted for the neighbours and called the police.

In the insufficiently urbanized stretches along the eastern fringes of the city, neighbours are almost as important as in a village. They were sympathetic to the woman. Attached to a hiring centre, she worked as an attendant for homebound patients, and I came to know her a couple of months after this incident when I was confined to the bed. Her work - and an unending cycle of loans and repayment - accounted for the schooling of her three daughters, their clothes and food, the house-rent, electricity and whatever else was needed in the house.

The man, who earned quite a bit as workman and sub-contractor, did not contribute anything to the family; earlier, he would put in a hundred rupees a month, making it clear, with blows and abuses, that he was paying for his food. He spent his money on drink, on serial affairs - occasionally vanishing with a woman for months - and hid the rest of his money. Usually he came home to eat and to punch his wife. She now has swellings on her head where he has hit her repeatedly. He beat the girls too, till they grew up and either turned on him or escaped.

There is nothing unusual in the scene. We have no count of women who live this kind of life or similar ones. Often, as in this case, they have their neighbours' support, for they fit notions of 'goodness': this woman was seen to be honest, struggling, devoted to her daughters and trying to educate them, faithful to her husband, patient and meek. In this story, the police were helpful too. Although the man managed to run away and hide with his aunt in a nearby village, the police, through a couple of men in the station who knew him, forced him to come back.

The State's machinery for the punishment of domestic violence had worked smoothly at each step, from the landlady and neighbours through the police to the moment the law would be applied. The semi-rural society that surrounded the woman was not, of course, a formal arm of the State, but it replicated collectively the ideals of order, safety, gender, duty and morality that the State would find convenient. Now the law would take over. The police assured the battered wife that they would teach the man a lesson. They could hold him up to three months.

The woman reacted with terror. What would happen after three months, if that? Could the police save her from him then? They could, but she would have to let them know. But only she, not her daughters, let alone the police, knew what he was capable of. The memory of excruciating pain in every part of her body, of repeated blows with unceasing abuse, the unreasoning fear of more hurt accompanied by equally unreasoning shame - all these were hers alone. He would be more enraged when freed. She did not want the law 'to take its course'.

The fear of the justice that the State was willing to offer her sprang from her rejection of the accepted notion of correctability. Violence cannot be cured by more violence, whatever official guise it comes in. But if the woman knew this, as do thousands of other women like her, certainly the State, the true specialist in violence, knows it too. What is the function, then, of the laws against domestic violence?

There was another angle to the woman's retreat. Her neighbours, who had acted as her protectors, had wished to ensure that her husband got a slap on the wrist. Had the man been locked up, and the case gone to trial, the situation would have changed subtly, gradually bringing out the woman's agency. When, instead of protecting his wife, a husband is seen to hurt her, the good folk next door take up the task of protection. They 'stand in' for the husband, exercising the mastery that comes with protection. They are not just saving the woman, they are also saving the marriage; they are imposing control. For her, they are 'society'. It is not expected that the woman would wrest this control from them, and she, too, knows that their goodwill, which she thinks she needs, depends on her continued 'goodness'.

Their hands tied, the police asked her to get the neighbours to talk to him - conduct a *shalishi*, in other words, that peculiar phenomenon in which the State comes to the doorstep in plain clothes - and to report to the station about his behaviour after three months. She had to go rushing back to them with a fresh complaint before three months were over, while she was working for me. But once again, she stopped them from taking action.

What I am looking at is a tiny segment of time in one woman's life among thousands of similar ones. The women I am referring to can, most of them, drop their violent husbands and set up house on their own. If they pay for their children's schooling as well as house rent, electricity and so on, what is to stop them?

Much of the terror of having an enraged husband return from a lock-up springs from the fact that the woman keeps living in the same house. True, it is her legal right; a violent husband cannot be allowed to drive her away. But rights are less palpable than daily battering. Yet the woman, although capable of living on her own, often holds on to this other right unknowingly and stays on. She fears that a woman on her own with children, maybe with growing daughters, is unsafe in any locality - if she gets a place for rent at all. Can society or the law prove that such a perception is ill-founded? On the contrary, this perception is reinforced by social attitudes towards - and unashamed exploitation of - an underprivileged working woman bringing up her family alone. The fear that a husband

addicted to violence will vengefully seek out the relocated family is actually less keen than this other fear. It is better to have the man come home drunk and uncontrollable than have no man at all.

This, of course, is not the whole picture. It is heartening to know that society is changing in spite of fears, attitudes and resistances, that the tireless efforts of activists are bearing fruit. Yet violence in the home is still widespread. (I am not bringing in rape outside the family or the intricate relationship of violence with the ordering and self-expression of a society.) Just looking at violent husbands, we need to ask, could I go to the law so that my husband is cured of his violence, maybe bringing about a penalty after trial, and then live happily ever after with a 'corrected' husband after his release from a correctional home? To go back to the earlier question, what is the function of laws against domestic violence?

For many women who survive their spouses' reckless battering from day to day, following the law to the culmination of its procedures would mean losing the marriage, the State-sponsored shelter without which she is virtually banished with her children into a vast grey hinterland of frightening possibilities. Activists and organizations may help her, of course, but we need to look at those without access to either. The law against domestic violence is double-edged in effect. Can the State, assuming its good faith, achieve anything here more than a slap on the wrist of the unrepentant offender?

Marriage is sustained by laws, but a supposedly affective relationship between two individuals at its core is expected to take the sting out of its economic, legal, social, and generally quietly coercive aspects. Violence in the home is peculiarly intimate; it is a terrifyingly personal act. It shows up the irreconcilability of law and personal relationships, and, paradoxically, becomes more intractable when protected by the institutional armour of marriage. A habitually violent spouse exposes the carefully arranged contradictions on which society balances itself. The informal and formal protective arms that the State extended to the woman who looked after me also imprisoned her.

To confront the elephant in the room: how can we stop sexual and domestic violence? Can we? Is it that the State has failed in its duty of education, hence it is now failing to protect its most treasured first unit, marriage? But are violence and education mutually exclusive? And what about violence itself? Where does it come from?

This reflection is not on violence, but on violent husbands. To stop them, perhaps we have to address the sources of violence in ways that will help make the implementation of laws against domestic violence less ambiguous, and protection less imprisoning.

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Women under represented in higher education in India: Report

Women continue to be under-represented in India's higher education leadership despite nine-fold increase in the government expenditure on the sector between 2007 and 2012, according to a British Council report.

While women constitute 44 per cent of the 27.5 million students in country's higher educational institutions, they constitute just 1.4 per cent of the professoriate and 3 per cent of vice-chancellors in the universities, it noted.

In most Indian universities, the representation of women academics is less than 40 per cent, added the report, titled 'Women in Higher Education Leadership in South Asia: Rejection, Refusal, Reluctance, Revisioning'.

"While in all categories of academic positions women are under-represented, this increases for higher positions. Thus, only 25.5 per cent of professors, 31.1 per cent of readers and associate professors, and 38.5 per cent of lecturers or assistant professors are women," it noted, analysing a 2013 report of the government.

The report, prepared by the British Council in collaboration with the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) of the University of Sussex, was released here at a two-day deliberation on the representation of women in higher education in South Asia. The event, organised by the British Council, concluded on Wednesday.

An analysis of the government data also indicated that women with disability represent only 1.9 per cent of the overall total number of academics in India. "Muslim women are also under-represented in Indian higher education, both in relation to male academics and overall. Of the Muslim academics, only 33.5 per cent are women, which is only 14.9 per cent of the total number of academics in India," underlined the report.

The report found that women in higher education in South Asia, including India, were not prepared for leadership. There was also evidence that when they did aspire for leadership, they were frequently rejected for the most senior positions. Referring to interactions with women faculty, the report highlighted how the country's universities' selection procedures were "exclusionary and discriminated" against women. "First and foremost, most selection committees have only men. Very few have women. Most that I've gone through, have all men on the committee, for any position," the report quoted a senior woman faculty. The British Council suggested that educational institutions should adopt changes in work practices.