

LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

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INDIAN EXPRESS

PIONEER

STATESMAN

TELEGRAPH

TIMES OF INDIA

CONTENTS

BACKWARD CLASSES	3-5
BLACK MONEY	6-7
CIVIL AVIATION	8-9
CIVIL SERVICE	10-14
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	15-21
EDUCATION	22-30
EMPLOYMENT	31-32
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	33-34
FORESTS	35-36
HEALTH SERVICES	37-39
INTERNET	40
JUDICIARY	41
NONRESIDENT INDIANS	42-44
POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT	45-47
POVERTY	48
RAILWAYS	49
RURAL DEVELOPMENT	50
TRANSPORT	51-52
URBAN DEVELOPMENT	53-57
WOMEN	58

BACKWARD CLASSES

HINDU, JAN 6, 2015

Double standards in reservation policy

OMAR RASHID

The Devendra Fadnavis government has sought legal opinion on reservation for Muslims, but not bothered with the legal validity of reservations for Marathas

LEFT OUT:“Muslims constitute around 10-12 per cent of Maharashtra’s population but are barely represented in government jobs and educational institutions.” Picture shows Muslim women paying homage to Mumbai terror attack victims.— PHOTO: PAUL NORONHA

Desperate times call for desperate measures. At the receiving end of a historic drubbing in the Lok Sabha election in May 2014 and facing another daunting State election later that year, the Congress-Nationalist Congress Party government in Maharashtra resorted to its favourite tactic: targeted sops.

In a bid to salvage any remaining hope ahead of the Maharashtra polls, the Congress-NCP government had in June last year issued an ordinance providing 16 per cent reservation in educational institutions and government jobs to Marathas and five per cent reservation to Muslims. Had it been implemented, the quota limit in the State would have gone over 70 per cent — grossly exceeding the cap recommended by the Supreme Court for reservation at 50 per cent. Within days, numerous Public Interest Litigations challenged it.

In November — by then the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had wrested power in Maharashtra — the Bombay High Court directed a stay on the reservation for Marathas. However, it allowed a five per cent reservation for Muslims in educational institutions. The BJP government (now supplemented by the Shiv Sena) maintained that it was keen on implementing the Maratha reservation but remained silent about Muslim reservations.

Ahead of the State polls, the BJP hinted at a changed stance towards Muslims. It steered clear of contentious issues such as ‘love jihad’ and focussed instead on wooing Muslims through welfare schemes for the community initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The chant “Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas” was oft repeated in seminars and functions held exclusively for Muslims. The RSS-BJP combine worked to make dents in that elusive Muslim vote bank. And just days before polling, the BJP reportedly even agreed to incorporate certain demands of a Muslim non-governmental organisation into its manifesto. The most significant assurance given by the party to the NGO was that it would work to publish the action taken report of the Mehmood-ur-Rehman Committee (MRC), a panel constituted in 2008 by the late Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh to assess the socio-economic and educational conditions of Muslims in the State, and implement its recommendations if it came to power.

None of that made it to the BJP's vision document. It would have been much more remarkable had the BJP actually gone ahead with its promise to implement the recommendations of the committee. In contrast, under the "social justice" section, the BJP manifesto spoke of the party's "total support" for Maratha reservation and promised steps for its "effective implementation."

Stark apathy

Since attaining power, the BJP's apathy towards Muslims has become stark. The recently concluded winter session of the Assembly should serve as an example. The Devendra Fadnavis government introduced the Maratha reservation bill and got it passed, despite the court's stay on it, while totally neglecting reservation for Muslims. A bill to replace the ordinance for Muslim reservation had to be introduced and passed in the just-concluded session of the Assembly for it to ensure quotas for Muslims, at least in educational institutions (upheld by the Bombay High Court), if not jobs, which was struck down by the court. Ironically, the Fadnavis government chose to introduce a bill for quotas for Marathas despite the highest court in the State striking it down. The Fadnavis government has come up with the inexplicable logic that it was engaged in consultations with the Attorney General on the legality of Muslim quotas.

The BJP has always been opposed to reservations on religious grounds but the explanation of the State government does not square up even with that position. As a result, the ordinance for Muslim reservation lapsed.

The Opposition proved to be no less duplicitous. They merely made politically correct noises. When the bill on Maratha quotas came up for voting, they staged a walkout arguing that the discriminatory approach of the BJP-Sena regime was not acceptable. For obvious political reasons they could not have been expected to oppose the Maratha quotas bill but the least they could have done was to insist on the simultaneous passage of the bills.

The demand for reservation for Muslims in Maharashtra was based on the findings of various government panels, primarily the Sachar Committee and MRC. The reports show that Muslims make up around 10-12 per cent of Maharashtra's population but are barely represented in government jobs and educational institutions. The study team led by retired bureaucrat Mr. Rehman recommended steps across spheres of life to bring about a change in the living conditions of Muslims. Noting that unemployment was high among Muslims, it called for 8-10 per cent reservation for Muslims in government jobs.

The Congress-NCP's position *vis-à-vis* Muslims has not been any less insincere. The MRC was constituted and submitted during the Congress-NCP rule but the parties did nothing to act on it.

Reservation for Marathas has been highly contested and the validity of their backwardness fiercely debated. The call for reservation for the dominant community was backed by the recommendations of the Rane committee, constituted by the Congress-

NCP regime, which said that Marathas, though holders of political clout, were socially and educationally backward. The 22nd report of the Maharashtra State Commission for Backward Classes headed by Justice R.M. Bapat had rejected the Maratha demand for reservation. That view has been upheld by numerous other experts.

Why did the Fadnavis government, which sought legal opinion on Muslim reservation, not seek similar opinion on the legal sustainability of reservations for Marathas? Union Minister for Minorities Affairs Najma Heptullah's attempts to assuage the disappointment of Muslims by stating that they didn't require quota and instead, should be made self-reliant, smacks of privilege-ism and has only triggered more criticism.

If the BJP government wants to prove that it adheres to social justice, and is committed to "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas," then it should make a commitment to bring a bill in the next session of the Assembly to ensure reservations to Muslims, at least in the education sector.

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To prove its commitment to 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas,' the BJP should bring a bill in the next Assembly session to ensure reservations to Muslims in Maharashtra

BLACK MONEY

BUSINESS LINE, JAN 7, 2015

To curb black money, legalise lobbying

PANKAJ KP SHREYASKAR

Lobbying need not be a shady affair, once a law is in place to regulate it. Parliament has a draft bill at its disposal

In broad daylight When less is eaten away Warren Price Photography/shutterstock.com
It is laudable that the government of the day should commit itself to “bringing black money back” into the country. The issue is whether this intent will translate into a legislation meant for the purpose. A draft is already in the works.

Black money consists of factor incomes and property incomes which should have been reported to income tax authorities, but are not. Black money is generated through land transactions, encroachments on land, payment of bribe, misuse of public property, misappropriation of public funds and evasion of taxes.

Most black money in India is invested in real estate and share markets. It is difficult to arrive at the exact amount of illicit money moved into various banks and tax havens outside India, as has been shared by the Prime Minister in his *man ki baat* with the populace.

Unlike dealing with domestic black money, dealing with the issue of illegal wealth held by Indians in foreign banks and tax havens is more complex, as it involves a favourable response of the foreign countries, keeping in view international as well as laws specific to that particular country.

Legalising lobbying

Funding politicians and political parties is one among several methods adopted to convert black money into white money. Suppose a businessman funds a politician with his black money to contest in the elections. When these politicians get elected, they return the favour in the form of policies for the businessman which is known as “lobbying”. Finally the businessmen profits from their “investment”.

In the wake of the Niira Radia tapes scandal, and Walmart’s regulatory disclosure to US authorities of having engaged in lobbying activities, a private member bill, The Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (DLA) Bill, 2013, was introduced in Lok Sabha on March 8, 2013, by Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo. The private member bill has at least presented a framework for regulating the lobbyists in the country.

The DLA Bill is a significant step, as for the first time in the history of Indian lawmaking a potential law recognises that lobbying is an integral part of democratic functioning. It remains to be seen however, whether such a bill ever be translated into law.

The DLA Bill requires the Centre to set up a central authority for registration of lobbyists, known as the Lobbyists' Registration Authority (LRA). The bill, thus, deals with lobbying activity as an activity to be reported and disclosed from time to time. The DLA Bill covers lobbying activities intended to be undertaken by any entity, whether by itself or on behalf of others. It, therefore, covers independent lobbying agencies, India Inc, trade unions, non-profit groups as well as trade and business associations such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci), which presently regularly represent their respective interests before the government.

The LRA is the administrative authority under the DLA Bill which empowers it to conduct investigations against persons it suspects of having engaged in lobbying activity without being registered with it.

With all the loopholes in the Bill, its passage (not in its original but a much more tightened and improvised form) may be an effective measure for the government that has expressed a strong will on the matter of black money. The DLA Bill is, itself, surely likely to be the subject matter of much lobbying (both for and against).

Public mood

What about public perception? Indian masses are accustomed to hearing optimistic claims from governments in the past on this issue, with little favourable results to show for their promises. There is no evidence of excitement on their part this time around. For the last two decades "bringing black money back" remained a favourite slogan of many political parties to woo their electorate.

The cynicism apart, the country does not lack well-intentioned people. Those substantially involved in the black economy are no more than 3 per cent of the population. Hence, countering the black economy is feasible if the lobbying activities can be regulated urgently.

The writer is a civil servant, presently pursuing his PhD. The views are personal

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated January 7, 2015)

CIVIL AVIATION

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 1, 2015

Woman IAS officer to head DGCA for the first time

M Sathiyavathy, an Additional Secretary and Financial Advisor to the Civil Aviation Ministry, will head Directorate General of Civil Aviation at a time when the aviation regulator's safety mechanism has been downgraded.

56-year-old Sathiyavathy, who will succeed Prabhat Kumar, will be the first woman to become the chief aviation regulator, official sources said, adding that the formal order is likely to be issued tomorrow.

Sathiyavathi, a 1982-batch UT cadre IAS officer, will remain at the helm of DGCA for three years till 2017, they said.

Kumar, a 1985-batch UP cadre IAS officer, was appointed only this January as DGCA by the erstwhile UPA regime for a three-year tenure. He had earlier served in the Civil Aviation Ministry from 2012 as a Joint Secretary.

Kumar has completed his central deputation period and is slated to revert to his parent UP cadre unless decided otherwise by the government.

Sathiyavathy was appointed as Additional Secretary and Financial Adviser in the Ministry in place of S Machendranathan this February.

The change of guard at DGCA comes at a time when India's aviation safety ranking has been downgraded and is up for review in early 2015.

The US aviation watchdog, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had downgraded the safety ranking from top category-I to category-II and brought it below Pakistan and on par with countries like Ghana, Barbados and Bangladesh on January 31, this year.

An FAA team visited India early this month to reassess the safety mechanism. The team is likely to submit a report by January 15, next year.

A final decision on whether India would get back its top class ranking is expected to be taken up by March.

The Airports Authority of India and Bureau of Civil Aviation Security are also awaiting full-time heads. The government is looking for a new Air India Chairman as incumbent Rohit Nandan has completed his tenure and is currently on extension.

HINDU, JAN 1, 2015

AI panel finalises draft salary structure for pilots

An Implementation and Anomaly Rectification Committee of Air India Limited has finalised the draft salary structure for executive pilots, and the representatives of the latter have been invited for discussions on the matter. The pilots, who worked with the erstwhile Air India and Indian Airlines, had demanded remuneration at par with the erstwhile Air India pilots.

While the pilots, also seeking arrears from the date of merger of Indian Airlines and Air India, took the issue to the Delhi High Court, the matter also came up in the Rajya Sabha in its winter session recently. As many as 19 executive pilots, led by Dinesh Ahluwalia, raised the issue in the High Court.

The Air India General Manager (Industrial Relations) has informed the HC Bench of Justice Hima Kohli that the proposed draft of salary and allowances would be placed before the Board of Directors and a formal proposal sent to the Civil Aviation Ministry thereafter for its approval.

The entire process of implementation of salary and allowances will be completed within a year, according to an affidavit filed in the High Court. The High Court disposed of the petition recently while observing that the petitioners would be at liberty to make a request to Air India for releasing some amount of allowances due as a tide over, which will be taken into consideration by the national carrier and appropriate orders would be passed on it.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Mahesh Sharma said in the Rajya Sabha in reply to a question that several human resource related issues had come up after the merger of Indian Airlines and Air India in August 2007, as the two public sector enterprises had different pay scales and emolument structures.

The Implementation and Anomaly Rectification Committee would harmonise pay and emoluments across all sections of employees of Air India, said the Minister.

CIVIL SERVICE

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 5, 2015

Guv returns KPSC appointments file

Bengaluru

Cites rules, apex court verdict to question govt recommendation

Governor Vajubhai Vala has returned to the State government a file on the appointment of chairman and members to the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC), advising reconsideration of proposed names.

The action is seen as a jolt to the Siddaramaiah government.

In a six-page letter, a copy of which is available with Deccan Herald, the governor has asked the State to provide vigilance clearance reports from the respective departments on all the proposed names after vetting by the Karnataka Lokayukta.

Vala has contested the names by referring to the apex court's 2011 verdict that cancelled the appointment of the head of Punjab Public Service Commission, the second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) report and advice by the then governor of Karnataka in 2007 on KPSC appointments.

The government had recommended the name of former Legislative Council chairman V R Sudarshan for the KPSC chairman's post. Dr H Ravikumar, medical adviser to the chief minister; Dr Nahabai B Bulla; Raghunandan Ramanna, who had unsuccessfully contested the Assembly elections; Michael Simon Baretto; IPS officer Syed Ulfat Hussain; K S Mruthyunjaya and Prof H Govindaiah were recommended as members.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has been opposing the names, arguing that Sudarshan and Raghunandan Ramanna were active politicians, while Govindaiah, Ravikumar and Hussain face various charges. Social activist T J Abraham has also petitioned to the governor against the names and threatened to move the apex court.

Vala, in his letter, mentioned the apex court's observation that appointing persons to constitutional positions only on the basis of political or party affiliations and without administrative experience does not go well for the state's apex recruiting agency. He quoted the ARC report that stipulated eligibility criteria for appointing official and non-official members.

"A member selected from among government officers should have held office under a State government or the Union government for at least 10 years and should have occupied the position of a head of department or secretary to government in a State or a comparable position in an institution of higher education. Member selected from non-official category should have practised at least for 10 years in any of the recognised professions like teaching, law, medicine, engineering, science, accountancy or administration," the letter stated.

It also refers to the advice by the governor in 2007 to submit a report of vigilance clearance for the names. “In future, it will be proper if vigilance clearance is vetted by the Lokayukta, too,” said the letter.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 5, 2015

Babus suspended for ‘unfair’ reasons may get relief

Aloke Tikku

In a move that could help All India Service officers (AIS) suspended for standing up to politicians, the Centre may soon have blanket powers to revoke their suspension if it concludes the order was unfair to the officer.

The Centre’s discretionary powers are part of a new set of suspension rules for AIS officers proposed by the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) that will cover officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service and the Indian Forest Service.

If the suspension rules are revised, the Modi government will have powers to “review any order passed under these rules, if there are reasons to believe and to be recorded in writing that injustice is being meted out to a member of Service”.

This will be helpful for officers reluctant to file a formal appeal against their suspension orders.

DoPT started reviewing the suspension rules in 2012 after a public outcry over the suspension of IAS officer Durga Shakti Nagpal.

The 2010 batch officer, posted as a sub-divisional magistrate in Uttar Pradesh’s Gautam Budh Nagar, had rubbed politicians the wrong way when she took on the local sand mining mafia and was suspended.

Last month, Patna municipal commissioner Kuldip Narayan faced political wrath and was suspended for going ahead with demolitions of unauthorised structures. As the Centre watched helplessly, the Patna high court had to step in to stay Narayan’s suspension.

To avoid this, the new rules -- apart from informing the Centre immediately about a suspension order -- require the state to get the order vetted by a panel of top civil servants within a week. After that it will have seven days to get the order confirmed from the Centre.

Existing rules give the state government 45 days to get the suspension order confirmed by the Centre or start disciplinary proceedings. This is the only occasion when the Centre can intervene.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 4, 2015

‘Hard working’ babus may get flexi-hours back

Aloke Tikku

Encouraged by its employees working harder and longer after the introduction of the Aadhaar-enabled attendance system, the Modi government is likely to revisit a plan to introduce flexible work timings for bureaucrats.

Government sources told HT there was recognition within the government on the need to introduce flexi-timings on a limited scale that would help employees strike balance in work-family commitments owing to the realities of a nuclear family.

This comes after an analysis of data generated by the new attendance system indicated 47,000 government employees who moved to the biometric system are already working 20 minutes longer than they did in September when the system was introduced.

“This average increase of 20-minutes per day means an approximate gain of 16,000 man-hours. This gain is equivalent to an additional workforce of almost 1900 employees every day,” a senior government official said.

From 1 January, all government officials in Delhi are required to mark their presence on this system.

“There is a need to incorporate flexi-timings for employees where needed and possible, without compromising on average work-hours to boost productivity further,” the official told HT.

According to attendance.gov.in – the website that puts the attendance record in public domain – not everyone still turns up on time.

For instance, on 1 January, 31.6% of staff showed up before the official start time of 9 am while another 56 % marked their attendance between 9 and 10 am. About 8% marked their presence between 10 and 11 am while the remaining 5% signed in after 11 am.

“But most employees who come in late, also stay well past 5.30 pm... and work more than the mandated 8 hours per work,” a senior official said.

In 2009, the home ministry had allowed its employees to come in a little late after it installed the biometric system, provided they put in 40 hours every week. The ground rules framed by then home secretary GK Pillai allowed officials stuck in peak hour jams to be excused if they are late by 30 minutes.

On two or three occasions every month, employees were also allowed to come late by two hours – or leave two hours earlier – on grounds of social obligations or medical consultations if they made up for the lost time in the same week.

The sixth pay commission had recommended flexi-timings for women if they put in the requisite 40 hours every week. But the UPA government had rejected the plan because there was no way of ensuring that people who turned up late also stayed back.

The existing rules, however, allow employees who turn up after 9 am only twice a month. If they are late by even a minute the third time, the rules require department heads to mark them on half-day's leave even if they stay back later.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 1, 2015

Jharkhand CM Raghubar Das asks officials to be 'Karamyogis'

"Transfer-Posting industry" would not function in Jharkhand and post of officials depend on their merit and work, Das was quoted.

RANCHI: [Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das](#) today said he did not believe in shuffling and reshuffling of administrative officials while calling upon the bureaucrats to become "[Karamyogi](#)" as the state has to find solutions to many problems.

"Transfer-Posting industry" would not function in [Jharkhand](#) and post of officials depend on their merit and work, Das was quoted in a press release.

The CM called upon the officials and employees to become "Karamyogi (one who considers work as religion)".

Das pointed out that the state faced several "problems" and the time has come to find solutions to them.

"Vigilance Bureau and Lokayukt to be further empowered and strengthened for setting up a clean administration," Das said, adding it was necessary to lay a strong foundation for development of the state.

"With cooperation of everyone, the government will prepare a blueprint for development (as) government has only one slogan - saab ka saath saab ka vikash (progress with everyone and of everyone)," the release said.

He said the government was making efforts to speed up work following lesser expenditure in the 2014/15 budget.

The government has a challenge to strengthen its internal resources in the next three months, he said, adding the government would make all efforts to reach its revenue collection target.

Das said the government has already initiated steps into the promises made before the electioneering and marked drinking water supply as government's responsibility.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 1, 2015

Maharashtra: K P Bakshi appointed as additional chief secretary, home

Bijay Kumar will be Principal Secretary, Reforms, in the finance department after returning from central deputation.

MUMBAI: Maharashtra government today appointed senior bureaucrat K P Bakshi as Additional Chief Secretary (Home), an official statement today said.

He replaces Amitabh Rajan who retired from service. Sanjay Kumar will handle women and child welfare department while Ujwal Uke has been given social justice department.

Bijay Kumar will be Principal Secretary, Reforms, in the finance department after returning from central deputation.

Jayashree Mukherjee will be Principal Secretary, minority affairs. She too is returning from central deputation.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

TELEGRAPH, JAN 6, 2015

Genius and impetuosity

- How the Niti Aayog could be of use to the prime minister **Writing on the wall** - Ashok V. Desai

On waking up at 5:55 on (Christian) new year's day, the prime minister got a brainwave. It drowned the Planning Commission. Painters from the public works department were summoned; they erased the commission's name from its portico, and renamed it Niti Aayog. Fifty-five is not too old for an institution, let alone a human. The prime minister is going strong at 65, and the aeroplane is still flying 5555 years after its invention by Swamy Kashtacharya. But institutions must reinvent themselves from time to time to stay relevant; unless they do, they fall off the screen like the Congress.

Niti Aayog - what does it mean? Sanskrit words can have many meanings; *niti* is no exception. It can mean morality, behaviour, guidance, politics, management and a dozen other things. Which one did the prime minister mean? Maybe he did not know, in which case he chose cleverly. But I suspect he meant policy.

Policy is made anyway by elected politicians sitting in ministries all around Niti Aayog; where will it fit in in that political football field? The original Planning Commission was supposed to formulate and supervise five-year plans, which were meant to tie ministries and states to long-term national development. This function is now transferred to the finance ministry. That is not injudicious. It is the function of the finance ministry to manage government money and allocate it amongst objectives and agencies. Finance ministries have this function in many countries. But many of them do much less forward planning than India. India too could do with less. But many countries that ignore long-term planning run into serious problems.

The commonest one is fiscal bankruptcy: governments become so indebted that they have no alternative to renegeing on their debts. Most of them avoid it by borrowing from uncles like the International Monetary Fund or the European Central Bank, or renegotiating their debt maturity with creditors from time to time. India also used to do that till the reforms of 1991. In fact, it was such a hopeless case that no international investors would have come near it; it borrowed mostly from international development finance institutions. The P.V. Narasimha Rao government of 1991, which I served for a while, repaired the fisc. Since then, the government of India has not borrowed abroad, although it has allowed state governments to do so. It borrows recklessly from the banks it owns. That cuts into banks' credit to productive sectors such as industry, and reduces the economy's growth. If our government were less of a spendthrift, maybe we could match China's growth.

Some countries resolve the problem of over-indebtedness by printing money, which is zero-interest government debt with infinite maturity. India has done it quite a lot, and has experienced severe bouts of inflation from time to time. I am sure the prime minister has

not planned such financial mismanagement. But he should be careful not to stray into it in an unplanned manner.

Still, there will be times when the government has to borrow or print money. It is, for instance, exchanging fire with Pakistan's army and terrorists on the border. Suppose these unpleasanties escalate into a full-scale war, the government may then have to spend without regard to the deficit. It can be argued that the economy is suffering from inadequate demand and that the government should reflate it by spending more or taxing less; that too would raise the deficit. So there will be times when the government spends too much, and other times when it should run surpluses.

The general practice of Indian finance ministers has been to satisfy the demands of their political friends and masters without regard to fiscal balance. They have largely ignored the need to restrain inflation or rebalance the economy; in most years they have run enormous deficits. Such recklessness could lead to hyperinflation or chronic stagnation. It has not done so in India because of the basic dynamism of its economy: private entrepreneurs have kept on investing irrespective of finance ministers' follies, and kept the economy growing. They may continue to do so; but one should not bet on it. It would be a good idea to introduce responsible, long-sighted fiscal management. That becomes even more important if long-term planning is transferred to the finance ministry.

The finance ministry is also a financier of the state governments. It transfers vast amounts of money every year to them. The Planning Commission used to supervise these transfers, and relate them to the states' plan expenditures. With its abolition, the task will devolve on the finance ministry. State governments are formed by various parties, some of them hostile to the one ruling at the Centre; not all will be happy with the finance ministry's distribution of favours. Some body is necessary for this function that the states will regard as neutral.

In my column of September 3, 2014, I had suggested a replacement for the Planning Commission. The *Research Papers in Economics* (RePEC) lists 139 economists in India whose work is of international standard. I suggested that the government should recruit and house in Yojana - sorry, Niti - Bhavan 139 research assistants. Each of them would be attached to one of the economists, and the 139 together would constitute a group that would answer questions of any minister, member of Parliament or bureaucrats of the rank of joint secretary and above. It would be an answer tank, not a think tank.

We need something more. For its model, the government should look at the British government's Office for Budget Responsibility. It makes five-year forecasts for the economy and the budget, which go into the annual budget. It judges how well the government is doing against its own target of balancing the budget over five years and bringing down public debt. And it analyses the health of the public sector's balance sheet.

The object of the Office for Budget Responsibility is to ensure the long-term financial viability of the government. The government of India would have broader objectives, such as preventing downturns, ensuring high growth, correcting regional imbalances,

integrating the states, developing international trade and investment, or making India an economic superpower. It may also need to work out the economic costs and consequences of its ministers' foibles, such as replacing German with Sanskrit, or banning the use of English in government. For each of these issues, it should appoint three economists, as different from one another as possible, and ask them to prepare a study within six months. They may bring or recruit research assistants. The Niti Aayog would serve as their secretariat.

The prime minister wants a muscular, active government. All action embodies the possibility of error; governments' errors affect millions of people for no fault of their own, and hence must be avoided as far as possible. Churning the issues amongst thoughtful people is a way of identifying such errors, as also a way of achieving objectives more quickly and economically. It is understandable that the prime minister hates planning. But if he wants to perform, achieve and leave a mark, he will need to look ahead and allocate scarce resources; some professional advice in doing so may make him a better prime minister.

ASIAN AGE, JAN 6, 2015

**Arvind Panagariya to be first chief of Niti Aayog
Debroy, DRDO's Saraswat & 4 Union ministers as members**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday named free-market Indian-American economist Arvind Panagariya as the first vice-chairman of the newly-created Niti Aayog, that replaces the 65-year-old Planning Commission, with a team of six members and three special invitees.

Besides Dr Panagariya, the PM, who is chairman of the Niti Aayog, also appointed economist Bibek Debroy and former DRDO chief V.K.Saraswat as its full-time members. Four Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley, Suresh Prabhu and Radha Mohan Singh were made ex-officio members.

Three other Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Smriti Zubin Irani and Thawar Chand Gehlot will be special invitees, a PMO statement said.

Dr Panagariya, 62, a renowned economist known for his market-friendly views, is a close associate of celebrated economist Jagdish Bhagwati. The two of them have often challenged Nobel laureate Amartya Sen to an open debate on the Indian economy.

Dr Panagariya is known as a strong supporter of Mr Modi's Gujarat model of development, had said some months back that he would like the BJP government's first Budget to boost capital spending even at the risk of a higher fiscal deficit. He has earlier worked with various international bodies like the World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank. He has been chief economist of the ADB and a professor of economics and co-director of the Centre for International Economics, University of Maryland, at College Park.

He has a Ph.D. degree in economics from Princeton, and has also worked for the World Trade Organisation and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) in various capacities.

The formation of the Niti Aayog, or National Institution for Transforming India, was announced on January 1. It will serve as a policy think tank for the Centre as well as state governments. It will have a governing council that will comprise all state chief ministers and lieutenant-governors, and will work to fostering a “cooperative federalism” for providing a “national agenda” to the Centre and all states.

There would also be specific regional councils, while experts and specialists from various fields would be there as “special invitees nominated by the Prime Minister”.

At the time of announcing formation of the Niti Aayog, the PM had tweeted: “A pro-people, pro-active & participative development agenda stressing on empowerment & equality is the guiding principle behind Niti Aayog. Through Niti Aayog, we bid farewell to a ‘one size fits all’ approach towards development. The body celebrates India’s diversity & plurality.”

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 5, 2015

NITI Aayog, a vague blueprint for change

The replacement of the Planning Commission with a new institution, more relevant and responsive to the present economic needs and climate in the country, had long been demanded and expected.

Former prime minister Manmohan Singh had himself spoken of the need to reform and restructure the planning body.

The old-style centralised planning had lost much of its utility in an era when Five Year Plans have lost their importance in economic development, when private investment far exceeds public investment and Centre-state relations have changed considerably.

The NDA government has dissolved the commission altogether and the new body, NITI Aayog, has a new structure, mandate and functions to perform. The government has said that it will serve as a think tank and provide the Centre with strategic and technical advice on policy matters. It will also help the states with consultancy and capacity-building.

The NITI Aayog will have a three-tier structure headed by the Prime Minister, with a governing council comprising chief ministers and governors of UTs, regional councils to deal with issues relating to more than one state, and a full-time organisational framework. With a role for states, it is likely to be a more representative body than the Planning Commission.

It is intended to adopt a bottom-up approach to planning where plans made at the village

and block levels contribute to the formulation of bigger plans at higher levels. This is in line with the idea of decentralisation of planning and development, and would strengthen the principle of cooperative federalism, if it is rightly implemented. There is also merit in the idea of giving the states the freedom to frame development schemes that best suit them, because the needs and levels of growth in different states are different.

While this is a good blueprint for change, there is need for more clarity on some aspects of the new body's responsibilities and functioning. The official announcement on the setting up of the NITI Aayog is long on generalities and short on specifics.

While it may not actually formulate plans and allocate funds, like the Planning Commission used to do, it may evaluate and monitor the implementation of schemes. It is not known what the mechanism for Plan fund allocation will be, or whether the Plans will continue to exist in the same format. The working of a new institution can be judged only after it has functioned for a sufficiently long time. The ideas which are claimed to guide the NITI Aayog are sound, but it has to implement them well, and disprove criticism that it is a gimmick.

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 1, 2015

Planning Commission to be renamed 'Neeti Ayog'

NEW DELHI: The Planning Commission, which was established in 1950, has been renamed 'Neeti Ayog'.

An official announcement to this effect is likely to be made later today, according to TV reports.

The decision comes nearly three weeks after Modi held consultations with chief ministers at a meeting where most favoured restructuring of the Socialist-era body but some Congress chief ministers opposed disbanding of the existing set-up.

[READ ALSO: Most CMs favour restructuring of Planning Commission, no consensus on disbanding it](#)

Reports say the decision to rename the Plan panel was taken at Monday's Cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has maintained that the Planning Commission has outlived its utility and time has come to replace it with a new body.

In his Independence Day address to the nation, PM had announced his govt's intent to set up a new body.

While addressing the Chief Ministers on December 7, Modi had invoked former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who had said on April 30 last year that the current structure has "no futuristic vision in the post-reform period".

However, the govt's move has faced strong resistance from Congress.

Congress leader Manish Tewari, speaking to Times Now, called the move 'a fluff with no substance'.

The Trinamool Congress also slammed the government's move.

(With inputs from PTI)

HINDU, JAN 5, 2015
A better plan, this

Niti Aayog sounds good, but certain key issues remain unresolved

The announcement of Niti Aayog to replace the six-decade-old Planning Commission could not have taken many by surprise. It was made clear within days of the Narendra Modi government assuming power that the Planning Commission, a vestige of the pre-reform, dirigisme days, would be wound up. In fact, the idea of an overhaul had gained ground during the last days of the UPA, with former prime minister Manmohan Singh pushing for such an exercise. So, it is a trifle disappointing that the New Year Day statement does not go beyond spelling out the broad contours. Even so, it indicates a welcome break from entrenched customs of the past. It seems that the practice of drawing up voluminous five-year Plans will be discontinued. Their targets and projections are often rendered irrelevant in a dynamic, market-driven, globalised world. The Aayog is expected to focus more on making policy than transferring funds to States, with the Finance Commission calling the shots with regards to the latter, as should indeed be the case. Niti Aayog's governing council, run by chief ministers can, in tandem with the Finance Commission, prepare the ground for rule-based, as against discretionary, resource transfers. The governing council can play a crucial role in achieving 'unity in diversity' as it were, in policymaking, ironing out inexplicable anomalies that have made India such a difficult place to do business in. The rest of the statement consists of generalities on which there can be no disagreement, but no discussion either, in the absence of details. As such, it's merely a call for policies that leave entrepreneurs, women, youth and other ordinary folks better off; in other words, a repackaging of UPA's inclusive development rhetoric.

While doing away with five-year Plans, the new body should focus on the microeconomics of specific sectors. There is a clear lack of information on this count, which has led to industry over-reaching itself in sectors such as coal, power, roads and aviation, and banks making wrong judgment calls. While allowing market forces to play out, exaggerated boom and bust cycles are best avoided. In the absence of a credible, independent database, investors are guided by unreliable projections of analysts and

market makers. In the licence era, the Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices was a repository of industry-specific information. Such an information base is sorely needed today. Niti Aayog can work in tandem with the Competition Commission, the Reserve Bank and 3P India (a body that aims to put public-private partnerships back on track) on this front.

The body, rightly informed by the principle of the government being an “enabler rather than provider of first and last resort”, has other messes to sort out. One is the baseless distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditure, which has led to all sorts of distortions in resource transfers. Second, it should restructure centrally sponsored schemes in order to restore the fiscal space of the States. The paternalism of the Planning Commission has outlived its time. Niti Aayog must live up to its name of handing out an even deal to all.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated January 5, 2015)

EDUCATION

STATESMAN, JAN 7, 2015

University education to have choice-based credit system

Taking up a subject of choice and migrating seamlessly from one university to another is set to become a reality from the coming academic session across the country as almost all the states today decided to adopt a choice-based credit system.

A suggestion was also accepted at the education ministers' conference here today to set up a joint working group comprising Central and state government nominees to sort out critical issues in implementing the choice-based credit system. The meeting which was chaired by HRD minister Smriti Irani also agreed that the joint working group will resolve issues arising out of the implementation of credit framework on skills which seeks to mainstream vocational education and bring respect to the skill programmes. The meeting was called to seek a consensus among the states to implement the system in all state universities as the Centre has already announced implementing them in the Central universities from the coming academic session.

Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, which already have the choice-based credit transfer system, had suggested setting up of the working group. The 'choice-based credit transfer' system will enable students to opt for courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, undergo additional courses and acquire more than the required credits and adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

PIONEER, JAN 5, 2015

DU to run 'Gifted Education Mahaabhiyan' for NDMC, MCD schools

Underprivileged yet talented students from classes V to IX of 90 MCD and NDMC schools here will be nurtured by Delhi University under a special campaign to ensure holistic learning for them.

'Gifted Education Mahaabhiyan', involving a funding of Rs 1.8 crore by the government's Department of Science and Technology through Principal Scientific Advisor office, is being run by DU's Cluster Innovation Centre (CIC).

"We conducted a test in 90 MCD and NDMC schools and have selected 76 students who belong to underprivileged community but are 'gifted' and have exceptional talent. We will now nurture them and run various workshops and counselling programmes to ensure holistic learning for them," CIC Director Madan Chaturvedi told PTI.

Delhi University has also conducted similar programmes in Guwahati, Ujjain and Baroda though they were not limited to underprivileged children and had students from private schools.

"After the selection, parents of the students will be called for counselling and then a team of experts including faculty and students of MSc Maths Education programme will chalk out modules for them," Chaturvedi said.

"The modules will run for six weeks and will include certain workshops, self-help tasks, counselling sessions and much more," he added.

The programme will be conducted in consultation with the NDMC and MCD schools to ensure that the sessions are conducted on holidays and do not hamper their regular studies.

"The programme is completely free for students and we will also provide pick and drop to the selected students. Our sole motive is to nurture them beyond their routine academic studies and not put any extra burden on them," he elaborated.

The varsity has plans to take the 'Mahaabhiyan' to a national level."We plan to take this to national level and conduct such programmes across the country. There are innumerable gifted children studying in our schools but we need to pay them extra attention to ensure that they become better professionals and policy makers in future," Chaturvedi said.

Jyoti Sharma, a faculty associated with the project, said, "The modules have been prepared after elaborate consultations with experts.

Special attention will be paid to each student and discussions will be held with their parents to enable us to cater to their individual needs."

After completion of the six-week orientation modules, CIC will conduct another test for filtering the students based on their performances and the process will go on for a year.

"The team of students and faculty conducting the programme has been imparted special training for dealing with the students and nurturing them.

"Also, question papers for test conducted have been prepared by experts to ensure that the students selected are exceptionally talented and have the potential to make the best use of the training sessions," Jyoti added.

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 6, 2015

Private colleges corner 64% central research funding

Adarsh Jain

COIMBATORE: Research is often considered the domain of premier national institutes, but data from the main funding agencies shows that almost 64% of projects funded by central agencies were from private universities and colleges.

These institutions also share 27% of the total funding disbursed by central agencies

during 2010-11, the latest data available, said the National Science and Technology Information System in a reply to an RTI application.

"Private universities and colleges have made an effort to develop infrastructure to be on a par with institutes of national importance," said Rajeev Sharma, adviser and head, Department of Science and Technology, government of India. "Of the 50 proposals that were received for scrutiny this year, nearly half are from private institutions."

While institutes of national importance such as IITs and NITs submitted 13% of the research projects, 8% were from national laboratories. Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, received the highest number of projects at 107, and the second highest funding of 178.6crore.

Five IITs — Kanpur, Bombay, Madras, Delhi and Kharagpur — had a high number of projects as well as funding, while Punjab Agricultural University, Delhi University, Annamalai University, Jadavpur University and Hyderabad University were among the highest receivers of projects in 2010-11.

The highest number of projects went to Maharashtra with 885 projects and funding of 449.6 crore, followed by Tamil Nadu with 840 projects and funds of 259.8crore.

"Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have benefited from the growth of industry. Industry-oriented problems have always been a subject of research," said Saravanan D, professor and head of textile technology at Bannari Amman Institute of Technology, Erode.

"In recent years, all educational institutions have been allocating significant marks to research publications for faculty appraisal," said a principal of a private engineering college. "This has pushed professors to pursue research activities seriously."

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 5, 2015

HRD ministry plans to rope in states for skilling drive, new education policy

The government had recently launched a credit framework aimed at promoting lateral and vertical mobility of students within the vocational education system.

NEW DELHI: The [HRD Ministry](#) is set to seek state governments' help to further Prime Minister Narendra Modi's skilling mission in a meeting called on January 6.

The government had recently launched a credit framework aimed at promoting lateral and vertical mobility of students within the vocational education system.

The meeting of all state education ministers on January 6 has been called to urge their governments to adopt the framework and also encourage colleges and universities to start

add-on courses to increase employability of students. At this meeting the ministry will also broach the topic of initiating consultations for the new education policy.

Under the new credit framework, students pursuing vocational education will have their learning and achievements mapped in terms of credits, which can then be used for transfer between institutions and programmes. The government is calling it the Skills Assessment Matrix for Vocational Advancement of Youth, or [Samvay](#).

Skill development is among the top priorities of the new [Modi](#) government, which has created a separate ministry for this purpose. [BJP](#) leader [Rajiv Pratap Rudy](#) has been recently anointed as the new minister for entrepreneurship and skill development. The government has set a target of skilling 500 m youth by 2022, out of which 50 m will be HRD Ministry's responsibility.

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 5, 2015

In dire need of reform

Rohit Dhankar

The Zakir Hussain Committee Report (1939) on basic education rightly saw examination system as “a curse to education”.

The Commission on Secondary Education (1952) spelled the curse out by pointing out that it dominates education in every aspect from content to teaching and that it becomes the sole motivation for learning.

Today, there is near unanimity that the examination system is in dire need of reform. Therefore, the Right to Education Act (RTE) is justified in emphasising continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE). However, all efforts to change the examination system almost always fail. One wonders why this exam system bounces back every time one tries to reform it. Obviously, there are many reasons. This article briefly hints at one, perhaps the most important, of them.

Examinations and the factory model of schooling: The structure of modern school, brought to India by colonial masters in curriculum, teaching and examination, assumes that knowledge can be organised into discrete packages, each to be mastered independently. Therefore, learning can be organised into grades, and the content of learning in each grade can be separated into subjects like language, mathematics and environmental studies without emphasising interconnections.

The curriculum, therefore, loses its aim of holistic growth and becomes a bag of more or less unrelated units. Once the curriculum is fragmented, the teaching and testing follow suit. Therefore, periodic checks on how much of each of these independent units is memorised becomes the most efficient way of evaluation. This is the birth of an examination system most suitable for a factory model of school.

The models of the school and examination support and give life to each other, and are highly management friendly and authoritarian.

The CCE as a possible alternative. What is demanded in CCE is 'continuity' and 'comprehensiveness' in assessment of learning. Discrete periodic events—however frequent—do not constitute continuity, unless one creates a sham misleading definition. One does not require much analysis to realise that the continuity in evaluation can be achieved only if the teaching itself becomes a process of evaluation for the child as well as for the teacher, and includes an ongoing sensitive response to the child's learning difficulties and achievements.

It is possible; but requires individual attention to each child. Therefore, the teacher needs to know each child, be in a position to make mental note of their learning behaviour in the classroom, needs to know their difficulties and successes individually, and to keep a reliable record of her classroom teaching every day. This, in turn, demands a high teacher pupil ratio, and institutional time for the teacher to plan, prepare and maintain notes. The system recognises none of these demands of CCE or not to the extent it should.

The second aspect in CCE is comprehensiveness, which demands attention not only to the particular concepts being taught, but to situate them in curriculum of the subject, and connect with what is being learnt in all other subjects as well as to the child's general problem solving behaviour. The teaching, therefore, becomes a highly reflective activity. In addition to scholastic learning, comprehensiveness also demands attention to the child's attitudes and dispositions. That further increases the demand for time and hard work.

The purpose: The central purpose of CCE is to facilitate better learning for the child. Three-fold variations in any class room can be easily understood: One, the children are likely to learn with different paces. Two, are likely to have different conceptualisations of what is being taught during the process of learning; for example, in their ways of understanding multiplication or how seasons change.

Their paths to achieve a common understanding are likely to differ substantially. Three, children come to class with different levels of preparedness to learn and interest in different subjects. Therefore, the same child may learn faster in one subject while may be slow in another. A suitable pedagogy for CCE has to facilitate learning in all these situations.

Little choice

On the other hand, the system demands that all children in a class complete the curriculum by the end of the session. This leaves very little choice for the teacher but to teach the whole class in a uniform manner. In order to complete, say, the upper primary curriculum in three years the teachers and children need an enormous amount of freedom to plan their work and execute it. The authoritarian system does not allow that.

To take an example, the understanding of child's knowledge in CCE has to be progressive making which becomes increasingly consistent internally as well as with accepted human knowledge at a given historical juncture. In this understanding, if the child is becoming progressively aware of her own ideas and tries to create coherence in them, it should be considered very good progress. But the year-wise packaged curriculum emphasises conformity, memorisation and reproduction on demand. These two attitudes to knowledge and learning contradict each other. As a result the teaching becomes geared to examination and the intellectually organic progress has to be abandoned.

It is clear, therefore, that the CCE can succeed only if we make the system flexible, change the notion of child's knowledge, formulate the curriculum as a learning continuum and restructure the school.

Surprising we continuously miss the point that the prevailing examination system is a creature of the structure of school and curriculum; and cannot be reformed without dismantling the authoritarian school. If we still lack the courage to question this structure, CCE will fail; or it will metamorphose into something very akin to the existing examination system; which will serve no good purpose than to kill one more excellent idea in education.

(The writer is with the Azim Premji University, Bangalore, and Digantar, Jaipur)

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 7, 2015

Reforms in teachers' education, 2-yr BEd soon

Vikas Pathak

The upcoming academic year will see a slew of reforms in teacher education such as the introduction of four-year integrated BA/BEd and BSc/BEd programmes across the country and the discontinuation of MEd course in open and distance learning centres.

At a meeting in Delhi on Tuesday, the Centre asked state education ministers to prepare for key changes that also include extension in duration of BEd and MEd courses to two years from the current one year, a mandatory 20-week teaching internship to be eligible as a teacher and introduction of part-time BEd course during vacations for teachers who don't have the degree.

The changes, including the introduction of integrated courses and discontinuation of the MEd one in open and distance learning institutes, will be implemented in the academic year of 2015-16.

The integrated courses would offer the option of a vocational course alongside BA or BSc to enhance employability and bridge the skewed gap between demand and supply of teachers.

The move to do away with the MEd course in open and distance learning institutes was aimed at emphasising the specialised training and seriousness required for the

programme, secretary (school education and literacy) Vrinda Sarup said at the meeting. Professor of education at IGNOU CB Sharma, however, told HT that the decision wasn't a well-thought one.

HRD minister Smriti Irani, who chaired the meeting, called upon the states to implement the proposed reforms, including a choice-based credit system. She also called for another meeting in February to discuss the proposed New Education Policy. "We want village education councils, blocks, districts, MPs and MLAs to discuss what our educational needs are... We should think of the New Education Policy," Irani said.

"We don't want orders from Delhi to decide it. We'll come to hear the people in villages of different regions," she added.

The reforms were passed recently by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) — the regulatory authority in the teaching field — on the lines of the justice JS Verma commission's recommendations.

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 7, 2015

Four-year integrated BA BEd, BSc BEd from this year

The Centre is set to roll out a four-year integrated BA BEd and BSc BEd programmes from 2015-16 academic session, with the Human Resource Development Ministry revising the teacher education courses' curriculum and duration.

This was announced during a meeting of the State Education Ministers, presided over by HRD Minister Smriti Irani here on Tuesday.

The ministry will also introduced two-year MA MEd programme from 2015-16 academic session, a senior official of the Ministry told the meeting, while making a presentation on reforms in teacher education and the regulations of the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), recently revised to improve the quality of teachers' education programme.

With the new integrated system, a student will now be able to get both the Bachelors in Science or Arts as well as a Bachelors degree in education in four years.

The two year integrated MA MEd programme will enable a student to get both Masters degrees together in two years.

In the existing system, a student has to study for two additional years besides the three year bachelors to get B Ed, while Masters Students should spend an additional year besides their two year regular programme to secure M Ed.

A student can under take BA BEd and BSc BEd programmes based on their personal preferences soon after passing class XII while a candidate can take up MA MEd programme after graduation.

Aiming at improving the quality of teacher education programmes, the Ministry has also decided to disallow students to undertake all teachers' education programmed through distance education.

A student undertaking BEd through distance learning will have to undertake MEd course in class room mode.

While working teachers have an option to pursue B Ed through distance education, they will have to complete the course in three years.

Those pursuing any of the teachers' education programmes will have to teach in a school in their vicinity for at least 20 weeks.

At the post graduate level, a student will have option to specialise in one subject like elementary education, a Ministry official said.

Addressing the day-long conference, Smriti Irani said: "Students and families are never consulted (on education policy). In the coming months, we will go to the states to listen to them. States should help us to hold deliberations right from the village educational council to the block and state level. We will hold a workshop in February with the education ministers in this regard."

INDIAN EXPRESS, JAN 5, 2015

Delhi University will train 'gifted' government school students

Underprivileged, talented students from Class V to IX of 90 MCD and NDMC schools will soon be mentored and trained by leading mathematicians and scientists from Delhi University, under a special campaign run by DU's Cluster Innovation Centre (CIC).

According to officials, the campaign — Gifted Education Mahabhiyaan — aims at providing holistic learning opportunities to 'gifted yet underprivileged children'. It has received funding of Rs 1.8 crore from the government's Department of Science and Technology.

"The project was started in 2010 in DU and National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. The idea was to identify children with high potential in Maths and Science and to groom them towards becoming better scientists. We first held this in 37 schools in Delhi and 11 in Kanpur, and we identified 26 exceptionally bright children. Six of those 26 children will now get individual mentors like a mathematician and a scientist," Jyoti Sharma, who heads the programme, said.

"The second leg involves identifying children in NDMC and MCD schools. So, we conducted a test in 90 MCD and NDMC schools and have selected 76 students who belong to the underprivileged community but have exceptional talent. We will now nurture them and run various workshops and counseling programmes to ensure holistic learning for them," she said.

“After the selection, parents of these students will be called for counselling. A team of experts, including faculty and students of MSc Maths Education programme, will chalk out modules for the students,” CIC Director M M Chaturvedi said.

“The modules will run for six weeks and will include workshops, self-help tasks, counselling sessions and much more,” he said.

The programme will be conducted in consultation with the NDMC and MCD schools to ensure that the sessions are held on holidays and do not hamper with regular studies. “It is completely free for students. We will also provide pick up and drop facility to those who have been selected,” Chaturvedi said.

EMPLOYMENT

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 7, 2015

Job creation, a challenge

Bharat Jhunjhunwala

Youth of the country voted Narendra Modi into power. It is time to deliver. The CRISIL, a global analytical company providing ratings, research, and risk and policy advisory services has pointed out that between 2005 and 2010, the number of jobs created was 2.7 crore but the number of self-employed fell by 2.5 crores. The net addition to employment was a meagre 0.2 crore.

The number of the youth work force in this period was about 5.5 crore. Only 4 per cent of the youth entering the labour market got jobs. This, despite the average rate of growth in this period being 8.7 per cent. Challenge before Modi is to provide jobs and usher in 'achhe din' with a much lower rate of growth of 5-7 per cent.

The UPA experience also tells that government-led job creation as in MNREGA will not sustain. The government has to impose taxes on the running businesses to garner monies for these programmes. This leads to killing of the productive economy. Challenge before Modi is to generate jobs without increasing government spending.

"Make in India" will not deliver. The CRISIL report points out that employment declined by 7 per cent in the manufacturing sector between 2005 and 2010 despite high rates of growth.

Big industries – both domestic as well as multinational – increased production by using automatic machines. They made more profits. The sensex roared. But large numbers of workers actually lost their jobs. The intensity of employment, that is, number of workers employed for generating output of Rs 1 crore declined from 171 to 105 in this period because industries used more machines and less labour.

Another study done by Centre for Studies in Economics and Planning at the Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar found that increase in FDI of 10 per cent led to reduction in employment of one per cent.

Modi should assess whether his advisers based in New York have delivered in their home countries. It will not do to call in a failed doctor to cure a terminal patient. There is an irreconcilable contradiction between two dimensions of achhe din espoused by Modi. The idea of making India a "developed" country means that frontier manufacturing technologies using robots would be used leading to displacement of workers. That is diametrically opposed to providing jobs to the 5.5 crore workers that will enter the workforce between now and 2019.

The challenge of 2015 is to find a way of creating not five crore jobs for those entering the job market, but to create 10 crore jobs to also clear the backlog accumulated during

the UPA government, and to do this without increasing government spending so that fiscal deficit and price rise is kept under control.

The way out is to calibrate the technologies used by big businesses. Economic policy should provide incentives to big businesses to employ more numbers of workers. The way forward is to segregate the manufacturing sector in two parts. Industries must be ranked according to the share of wages in the value added. Labour-intensive industries, say tanneries or food processing industries, may pay wages of Rs 40 to add Rs 1,000 to the value of goods produced.

The trick is to reduce the excise duty, sales tax and income tax on the labour-intensive industries and increase them for the capital-intensive industries such that the average rate of taxation remains unchanged. That will provide impetus to labour-intensive industries. This exercise can also be done at the unit level. One labour-intensive sugar mill may employ 1,000 workers while another capital-intensive mill may employ 500 workers to produce the same amount of sugar. Tax policy can be made to impose low taxes on the former and high taxes on the latter. In this way the government can goad the businesses to employ more workers.

Labour reforms

Labour reforms can be tied to employment. Present policy is to impose harsh labour laws on units that employ more than 300 workers. The line is drawn irrespective of the value added. An agarbatti factory that produces goods worth Rs 1 crore and a cement factory that produces goods worth Rs 100 crores are subject to the same labour laws if they employ more than 300 workers. This creates an incentive to employ lesser numbers. Way out is to calculate wage payments as share of value added. Industries like agarbatti that have high share of wages in their output should be exempt from labour laws.

Then industries will try to employ more numbers so that they can come out of the scanner of labour department. It would be possible to convince the people, if not the trade unions, that this is not an anti-labour policy since exemption from labour laws will be tied to creation of large numbers of employment. Problem in implementing this approach is that many members of Modi's cabinet have financial interests in big industries. They are loath to generate more employment. Modi's infatuation with the west is also a big stumbling block. The "Look West" policy of Modi essentially leads to giving free play to big industries.

Modi must realise that there is a deep dissatisfaction in these countries with the present economic model. But this is not so visible because the total numbers on unemployed in these countries is small. The game is entirely different in India where numbers of unemployed are exceptionally large. Industries in the United States can kill jobs and the government can provide them with unemployment compensation because the numbers are small. Modi must wake up and not follow the disastrous policies of Manmohan Singh that led to the denouement of the UPA.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

BUSINESS STANDARD, JAN 1, 2015

Govt splits CMD's post in state-owned banks

Begins reforms drive in the segment; four lenders get MD & CEO, to have part-time chairman; no decision on fixed tenure yet

In a departure, the government has split the post of chairman and managing director at public sector banks (PSBs). In a statement on Wednesday, the finance ministry named managing directors (MDs) and chief executive officers (CEOs) of four banks and said the procedure for selection of a non-executive chairman would be announced shortly.

Under the new format, “the chairman (except for State Bank of India, or SBI) will be a part-time board member who will preside over board meetings and not be an executive chairman”, said a statement by the finance ministry.

While the move is in line with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)’s suggestion, some of its other recommendations, such as fixed tenure of chief executives, haven’t been made effective. The new appointments are for three years or till the candidates retire, whichever is earlier.

WHO IS HEADED WHERE		
MD&CEO	Bank	Post vacant since
 P Srinivas	United Bank of India	Feb 21
R Koteeswaran	Indian Overseas Bank	Aug 1
 Animesh Chauhan	Oriental Bank of Commerce	Oct 1
Kishore Kumar Sansi	Vijaya Bank	Becomes vacant on Jan 1, 2015

Last year, the government had announced a fixed tenure for the SBI chairman. It was expected the procedure for other PSBs would be the same.

The four banks for which new MD & CEOs were announced on Wednesday were Oriental Bank of Commerce, Indian Overseas Bank, [United Bank of India](#) and Vijaya Bank (whose CMD, V Kannan, retired on Wednesday).

Top posts in banks yet to be filled		
Bank of Baroda Vacant since: 31 July	Syndicate Bank Vacant since: 23 September	Canara Bank Vacant since: 10 October
Punjab National Bank Vacant since: 10 October		

While R Koteeswaran, executive director (ED), Bank of India, has been appointed MD & CEO of Indian Overseas Bank, Animesh Chauhan, ED, Central Bank of India, will head Oriental Bank of Commerce. Kishore Kumar Sansi, currently ED at Punjab and Sind Bank, will be MD & CEO of Vijaya Bank. P Srinivas, ED at Bank of Baroda, will move to United Bank of India as MD & CEO.

RBI had suggested splitting the post because a bank CMD also presided over board meetings and, as such, was extremely powerful.

Wednesday's move comes two days before the finance ministry is scheduled to hold a meeting with bankers in Pune on areas of reforms. Blueprints of the proposed reforms will be presented to the prime minister at the concluding session of the meeting.

Experts say the latest move could well be the start of long-pending reforms at PSBs.

Earlier, a committee headed by former Axis Bank chairman PJ Nayak had suggested radical changes, including the government giving up control in PSBs, for improving corporate governance practices.

After the National Democratic Alliance government came to power at the Centre in May, it cancelled all future appointments decided by the United Progressive Alliance government. As a result, there were eight top-level vacancies at PSBs. The top posts at four banks — Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, Punjab National Bank and Syndicate Bank — are still vacant.

“The appointment at Syndicate Bank is still under the consideration of the government. It will be decided very soon,” the finance ministry statement said.

For the remaining three lenders, which are bigger in size (category-A, with total business of Rs 3 lakh crore), the government said it had decided to go for a fresh selection procedure to widen its search for candidates. “The procedure for this will be announced shortly,” the release added.

FORESTS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 5, 2015

Legal cover to post-1980 plantations may soon go

[Chetan Chauhan](#)



The government is planning a change in the definition of forests to withdraw legal cover for any man-made plantations or green zones notified after 1980, as part of a new environmental regime aimed to improve ease of doing business in India.

The Centre is also looking to change the process of filing appeals with the National Green Tribunal, India's green watchdog that has been accused by the environment ministry of exceeding its brief while deciding on environmental approvals.

Environment minister Prakash Javadekar told a news channel earlier this week that there would be "a new green regime in 2015", confirming amendments to five key environmental laws will be introduced in the upcoming budget session of Parliament that begins late February.

If they go through, no approval under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) will be required for clearing green areas that came up after 1980 or forests on private land. Cutting down trees planted along highways, railway lines and other projects will also not require prior approval from the Centre and state governments. For example, the large number of trees planted by the Delhi Metro near Najafgarh will lose their green law protection under the new regime.

The approval process under the FCA is considered a major reason for delay in execution of projects.

The current definition of forests, as determined by the Supreme Court, includes any area with trees including compensatory afforestation, where agencies plant trees to make up for the loss of greenery incurred during projects.

The definition, however, created a lot of confusion in forest regulation and led to a large number of litigation over clearance of schemes, a ministry official said. The government now aims to end this ambiguity.

The way out was devised by the TSR Subramanian committee that said only those green areas notified as forest before October 25, 1980 — when the FCA came into force — should be treated as forest for purposes of approval and clearance.

This exercise is part of a bigger overhaul in India's green regime to reduce the scope for judicial intervention and improve the country's business climate.

Five laws – the Environment Protection Act, the Forest Conservation Act, the Water Act, the Air Act and the Indian Forest Act — stand to be amended. To dilute the powers of the NGT, the government proposes to introduce another layer for appeal against ministry approvals, similar to the mechanism in the Right to Information Act.

In the new regime, the first appeal against an approval will have to be made with the environment appellate board comprising senior government officials. Only then can a second appeal against the board's decision be filed with the national green watchdog.

The government is also looking at diluting the provision of mandatory consent of gram sabhas for a project.

HEALTH SERVICES

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 1, 2015

Govt proposes health cess in new policy

A new health policy framed by the Narendra Modi government has proposed imposition of health cess and a seven point action plan.

It has, however, decided to remain silent on costly education in private medical colleges and absolved private hospitals from their legal obligation of treating the poor.

“Given that the private sector operates within the logic of the market and that they contribute to the economy through their contribution to the growth rate and by the national earnings from medical tourism, there need not be any major effort to persuade them to care for the poor,” says the draft of the policy released on the last day of 2014. The 58-page document, recognises that there is an obligation on the part of the private sector to treat the poor, because of their access to considerable tax exemptions and public acquisition of land.

On expensive medical education in private colleges, the policy prescribes precise little besides merely saying they charge very high for clinical care and professional education.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 1, 2015

Government may introduce free primary healthcare via public facilities

A large chunk of the proposed plan to be funded through taxes, at least for 70% of the economically weaker sections, according to a new health policy draft.

NEW DELHI: The [Narendra Modi government](#) aims to move toward a new healthcare regime in which primary care will be offered free to all through public facilities. Aside from this, an assorted list of secondary and tertiary services will be bought by the government, mainly from public healthcare facilities and to a limited extent from private players, according to the health ministry's proposal.

A large chunk of this plan is proposed to be funded through taxes, at least for 70% of the economically weaker sections, according to a new health policy draft unveiled on Wednesday. People with a per capita monthly consumption expenditure of less than Rs 1,640 in rural areas and Rs 2,500 in urban areas at current prices will qualify for such assistance to start with.

The draft policy also makes the case forcefully for more than doubling public spending on health to at least 2.5% of GDP. "The document has clearly spelt out that, of the sum, the Centre is committed to spending close to 40%, and this is commendable," said Sakhivel Selvaraj, health economist at Public Health Foundation of India. India's current level of public spending on health, inclusive of what the Centre and states invest, is about

1% of GDP and among the lowest globally. Making clear that the plan involves a tax-based financing mechanism is also laudable, Selvaraj said.

"Every family would have a health card that links them to a primary care facility and be eligible for this package of services," according to the new health policy draft. It seeks to broaden the definition of [primary healthcare](#) by including many more services related to reproductive and child health, communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases. "Till now primary care has been very selective, covering less than 20% of primary healthcare needs," it said.

Lakhs of accredited social health activists, better known as ASHA workers, will drive enrolment of families with the public primary healthcare centres, apart from following up on much of the basic healthcare prescribed. For secondary and tertiary healthcare, the government aims to act as a single payer and "strategic purchaser" of services. Among private facilities it would seek out under the proposed regime, "not-for-profit" ventures will be preferred.

[Public hospitals](#) shouldn't be seen as social enterprises doling out free healthcare but should be reimagined "as part of a tax-financed, single-payer healthcare system" that delivers "cost-efficient prepaid care (like in commercial insurance)", the document said. The policy envisages the creation of agencies similar to trusts that would be entrusted with buying services.

Some of the grey areas need to be made clearer, Selvaraj said. "The role of private insurance firms in this ecosystem is not spelt out clearly and how exactly these schemes would be implemented also needs more clarity," he said. Globally, the efficient delivery of healthcare has always involved the private sector partnering the government, said [Vishal Bali](#), former CEO of [Fortis Healthcare](#) [BSE 0.81 %](#) and chairman [Medwell Ventures](#), a home healthcare service provider.

"In India, most of the capacity in the healthcare space has been created in the private sector in last two-three decades. The policy direction seems to be right as far as proposing that the government should buy healthcare services from private players," he said. But creating viable price points for such services to be purchased is also equally important for uninterrupted services and this is where most government-run healthcare plans have struggled, Bali added.

Private facilities will be empanelled by government for specific healthcare services that it decides to provide for a set of the population, particularly the vulnerable sections.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 1, 2015

Government puts new health policy draft in public domain

"The Health Policy can be viewed at www.mohfw.nic.in. The last date for sending views and comments is February 28, 2015," an official statement said.

NEW DELHI: Seeking "highest possible level of good health" through preventive and promotive care, the Centre today put the draft of the new [National Health Policy](#) in the public domain to receive suggestions from various stakeholders.

The policy's objectives are to improve the people's health status through concerted policy action in all sectors and expand preventive, promotive, curative, palliative and rehabilitative services provided by the public health sector, according to the draft put up at the Health Ministry's website.

It also aims at a "significant reduction" in out of pocket expenditure due to health care costs and lowering of proportion of households experiencing "catastrophic health expenditures and consequent impoverishment".

It looks to assure "universal availability" of free, comprehensive primary health care services, as an "entitlement", for all aspects of reproductive, maternal, child and adolescent health and for the most prevalent communicable and non-communicable diseases.

"The [Ministry of Health and Family Welfare](#) has placed the draft copy of the new National Health Policy, 2015 in public domain to seek suggestions, comments and views from various stakeholders.

"The Health Policy can be viewed at www.mohfw.nic.in. The last date for sending views and comments is February 28, 2015," an official statement said.

The goal of the policy, the draft says, is "attainment of the highest possible level of good health and well-being, through a preventive and promotive health care orientation in all developmental policies and universal access to good quality health care services without anyone having to face financial hardship as a consequence".

It lists equity, universality, accountability, ethics, professionalism, affordability among its "key policy principles".

The emphasis on alternative medicine also finds a mention in the draft, which says patients would have access to 'Ayush' care providers based on validated local health traditions.

INTERNET

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 1, 2015

Govt blocks websites carrying anti-India content from ISIS

Government has blocked 32 websites citing national security concerns, as they were allegedly carrying anti-India material from terror groups such as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

"We have blocked some websites, as there were serious national security concerns," a government official.

The websites that have faced the crackdown include popular video sharing platforms like DailyMotion and Vimeo, while some of them have been allowed to function after removing the objectionable content.

The website were purportedly containing material about Areeb Majid, an alleged ISIS member who was arrested by NIA, and three others hailing from North Karnataka's Bhatkal area.

Sources said the websites were being used to induce Indian youth to join ISIS and for spreading news about purported death of certain persons while fighting Allied Forces in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Another senior official said the crackdown followed an order from Mumbai Court, which was approached by Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) with a plea to block some websites carrying anti-India content.

During its probe into certain terror cases, the ATS had received information that some websites were carrying anti-national content, the official added.

Meanwhile, BJP's IT Cell National Head Arvind Gupta also said the websites have been blocked on the advice of ATS as they were carrying material from the ISIS.

"The websites that have been blocked were based on an advisory by Anti Terrorism Squad, and were carrying anti-India content from ISIS," Gupta said in a tweet.

He further said: "The sites that have removed objectionable content and/or cooperated with the ongoing investigations are being unblocked." A list of 32 websites, purported to be a Department of Telecom (DoT) circular, also went viral on the micro-blogging site Twitter today. While there was no official word from the ministry, sources within the department confirmed existence of such a circular. Government has been trying to strengthen cyber monitoring in the wake of growing use of Internet and social media by global terror outfits like ISIS to indoctrinate Indian youth. It has also initiated various efforts to cultivate and nurture experts in the area of information security.

JUDICIARY

STATESMAN, JAN 1, 2015

President gives nod to Judicial Appointments Commission Bill

New Delhi, 31 December: The Constitutional amendment Bill that seeks to scrap the collegium system of appointing judges to higher judiciary has received Presidential nod.

The National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) bill passed by Parliament in August this year has received President's assent, official sources said.

The new law facilitates the setting up of a commission for appointment of judges, replacing the 20-year-old collegium system, which has been under severe criticism.

It paves the way for the setting up of NJAC, which will appoint and transfer judges to the Supreme Courts and the 24 High Courts.

The bill, 124th amendment to the Constitution, grants Constitutional status to the NJAC and its composition which will be headed by the Chief Justice of India.

As many as 16 of the 29 states have ratified the bill. Any Constitutional amendment bill requires ratification by at least 50 per cent of the state legislatures.

Besides the CJI, the judiciary would be represented by two senior judges of the Supreme Court. Two eminent personalities and the Law Minister will be the other members of the body.

NON-RESIDENT INDIANS

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 6, 2015

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to focus on khadi, Mahatma Gandhi

“It is a great moment for Gujarat with the centenary of Bapu’s return, celebration of Pravasi Divas and inauguration of the museum all coinciding.”

AHMEDABAD | NEW DELHI: [Khadi](#) will strike a thematic, homecoming note at the 13th edition of the [Pravasi Bharatiya Divas](#) that begins on Wednesday in Gandhinagar. The fabric, redolent of freedom movement, is perhaps the natural choice for an event that will showcase the life and work of the Father of the Nation to 4,000 global Indians expected to attend the event in a city named after him.

The expatriates and people of Indian origin will also be taught to weave khadi and be presented with gifts made of the fabric, officials said. A khadi utsav will be part of the programme, featuring designs by weavers from Saurashtra and Surendranagar. [Mahatma Gandhi](#) will be portrayed as the greatest Bharatiya Pravasi with a number of discussions on Gandhian thought, its relevance and importance today.

"Gandhi saw khadi as an answer to problems of shortage and dependency," said an official associated with the event. "There will be a focus on projecting khadi as India's own fabric in the session and highlighting its importance in freedom struggle."

Although PBD has been celebrated every year since 2003 in memory of Gandhi's arrival in India from South Africa on January 9, 1915, this year's event will lay emphasis on this aspect, this being the centenary year.

"Modi had requested NRIs to come for the event in his [Madison Square Garden](#) event during his US visit (in September)," said an official. "Many have been sent personal invitations. The enthusiasm is much higher." Modi is closely monitoring preparations for the event, having conceptualised its theme. Foreign minister [Sushma Swaraj](#), MoS VK Singh and officials of the PMO are also making sure that everything runs smoothly.

State government spokesperson [Saurabh Patel](#) said the largest museum dedicated to Gandhi will be inaugurated on January 8. "It is a great moment for Gujarat with the centenary of Bapu's return, celebration of Pravasi Divas and inauguration of the museum all coinciding."

Not all Gandhians are impressed, however. "NRIs wearing Gandhi topis and using charkha is only going to be a grand PR exercise for the PM. He is doing this only to get international claim. If he really valued Gandhi so much, he would have at least reprimanded his MPs who openly praised Godse," said N Vasudevan, director, Indian Council for Gandhian Studies. He was referring to comments in support of [Nathuram Godse](#), Gandhi's assassin.

BUSINESS STANDARD, JAN 7, 2015

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2015 to see more than 500 B2B meetings

OIFC will be signing MoUs with various business associations for strengthening connections with the Indian diaspora

The [Pravasi Bharatiya Divas](#) 2015 (PBD), the flagship event of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Government of India, is likely to see over 500 pre-scheduled business meetings during the PBD and the [Vibrant Gujarat](#) Summit between January 7 to 13 in Gandhinagar.

Calling it the biggest PBD so far, Charu Mathur, chief executive officer, Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), the economic engagement arm for the diaspora of the MOIA, said that "The [B2B](#) meeting starting during the PBD would continue through out the year. There is a huge spike in the interest levels from the non-resident Indians this year, especially from the Gulf region."

The OIFC is a public-private partnership between the [MOIA](#) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) formed to facilitate the economic and intellectual engagement of the Indian diaspora with India. It is working towards setting the stage for the ninth annual "Market Place Forum" from January 7 to 13, during the PBD and the Vibrant Gujarat Summit. The 'Market Place Forum', a premier business networking platform for PBD delegates would be inaugurated by the Minister of External Affairs, Overseas Indian Affairs, Sushma Swaraj.

Mathur added that the OIFC will be signing MoUs with various business associations for strengthening connections with the Indian diaspora. "After our diaspora Engagement Meets in Bahrain and London in 2014, we have received multiple queries from the Indian diaspora on sectors of clean energy, education and skills, healthcare, infrastructure and real estate," she claimed adding that the diaspora is curious to know about how the new government at the Centre is working, handling things. "They want to witness what is happening on ground here in India," Mathur said.

PBD is celebrated on January 9 every year to mark the contribution of overseas Indian community in the development of India. January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever. The PBD is organised between January 7-9 every year since 2003.

As per the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotions (DIPP), ministry of Commerce, GoI, the total foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows from individual non-resident Indians (NRIs) from January 2000 to April 2013 was \$4684.25 million. Net inflows under various NRI deposit schemes of the [RBI](#) increased significantly during 2013-14 and stood at \$38.9 billion while it was \$14.8 billion in 2012-13. About seven per cent of the funds remitted by the overseas Indians are invested in land, property and equity shares. While 20 per cent of the funds are parked in bank deposits, share of remittances used to meet family expenses has come down from 61 per cent to 49 per cent, according to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) survey.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

TELEGRAPH, JAN 7, 2015

Bengal: success of failure

- A short history of a long decline Rudrangshu Mukherjee

Like most things to do with Bengal, its culture and its politics, the story of the region's decline begins in the 19th century. Already in the middle of that century, contemporary journals were writing on the themes of crisis and decline. The decline is like a chronicle foretold. In the very recent past, especially in the grim present, the perception of decline has become a palpable reality. Why this haunting sense of despair, the idea that Bengal is not being governed, and the growing feeling that perhaps Bengal cannot be governed at all?

Without going back to the 19th century, when the people of Bengal could not rule themselves for obvious historical reasons, it is more convenient to begin with the post-Independence years. Up to 1967, the government and the official machinery of the State remained in the hands of the Congress. The latter saw itself as the legatee of the national movement and therefore the natural party of governance. It projected itself as the party of order. It not only dominated politics and the government, but at a more informal level it also wielded enormous influence over some of the institutions of civil society - the universities, the newspapers and some of the cultural fora.

Away from the seats of governance and civil society, a different mode of politics was emerging and becoming powerful. This was the politics of agitation and protest growing out of several social and economic factors. One was the problem of rising population caused by the influx of refugees from East Pakistan. Bengal became an economy of shortages, especially foodgrains and housing. The departure of the managing agencies, the pivot of industrial and commercial activity in the state, and the overall conditions adversely affecting the Indian economy, resulted in industrial stagnation. The number of the unemployed spiralled. In Bengal, the dreams that Independence had brought turned into nightmares.

The mid-1950s witnessed strikes, *hartals* and mammoth political rallies at the forefront of which were tram workers, bank employees and students organized by the Communist Party of India. The politics of protest eroded the basis of the politics of order that the Congress represented. The mass agitations and opposition to the government led to the emergence of alternative centres of power that challenged the existing structures of governance. As the social scientist, Partha Chatterjee, observed in an essay, "If Writers' Buildings, Raj Bhavan and the Assembly House were the centres from which the destiny of the State was being controlled by those who had the mandate to rule, then Esplanade East, the Monument and the Brigade Parade grounds, lying outside the protective cordon thrown around the citadels of power, were the new rallying points of mass protest".

There are two features of this kind of politics that are worth noting since they have kept on recurring in the politics of Bengal. One is the large-scale destruction of public

property by the protestors and the other are the repressive measures - arrests and police firing - of the administration. The momentum of this kind of politics led to the victory of the United Front in 1967 - the first non-Congress government in Bengal. Two other factors contributed to the success: the increasing radicalization of politics, which, in turn, was the result of the influx of refugees and the influence of the CPI (which split in 1964 to form the CPI and CPIM); and the growing perception that the Congress was no longer the party of the people but of the propertied, a party that ruled through machinations and the manipulation of privilege.

The radicalization of politics was intensified by objective conditions: food shortages, rising prices and increasing income disparities. Even sections of the population not normally associated with agitational politics joined *bandhs* and various forms of work stoppages. Protests frequently turned violent and common targets were markets, rice mills, procurement offices, railway stations, trams and buses. The period also witnessed the emergence among the urban population of a new note of social criticism and radical activism. At the vanguard of all this was a cosmopolitan intelligentsia with the dream of socialism in its eyes.

In this kind of heady atmosphere, in 1967, an electoral victory - the product of a united opposition to the Congress - was seen and celebrated as a socialist seizure of power. This made the United Front forget the responsibilities of running a government. Antonio Gramsci, the most important Marxist thinker after Karl Marx, had written about such a situation, "What is needed for the revolution are men of sober mind, men who don't cause an absence of bread in the bakeries, who make trains run, who provide the factories with raw materials and know how to turn the produce of the country into industrial produce, who ensure the safety and freedom of the people against the attacks of criminals, who enable the network of collective services to function and who do not reduce the people to despair and to a horrible carnage. Verbal enthusiasm and reckless phraseology make one laugh (or cry) when a single one of these problems has to be resolved even in a village of a hundred inhabitants." Under the United Front from 1967 to 1969, and subsequently from 1977 for the next 34 years, not to speak of the interregnum between 1971 to 1976, what Bengal got from the ruling dispensation was exactly the opposite of what Gramsci had written. Bengal ceased to be governed.

Immediately after being voted to power, the United Front government announced that its policies would be directed towards "recognizing the rights of workers and peasants to voice their just demands and grievances"; and it pledged itself "not to suppress the democratic and legitimate struggles of the people". Calcutta and its suburbs were the first to feel the impact of these policies. The labour minister, Subodh Banerjee, announced that the government, as a part of the policy of upholding workers' demands, would support *gheraos* as a legitimate tactic in settling labour-management disputes. There was a drive, led by the CPI(M), to unionize workers, and promises were held out to the workers that all their demands would be met even if they did not perform their duties. Workers were given the guarantee that their wages would rise irrespective of performance. The immediate result was that between March and August 1967, 583 establishments were subjected to 1,018 *gheraos*. The police, under orders from the

government, did nothing. Capital fled and smaller businesses shut down. More importantly, work culture came to be eroded.

Violence escalated across the state from the late 1960s to the early 1970s because of the activities of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and its brutal suppression by the police, who often acted with the full cooperation of the Congress cadre. The repression was masterminded by Siddhartha Shankar Ray (who became chief minister in 1972 after the United Front had been displaced by a Congress ministry) and it spilled over to cover CPI(M) activists.

These years set the pattern of politics in Bengal: attack against capital, open violence by party cadre, the police and the administration acting only at the behest of the ruling dispensation, irresponsible trade unionism and the collapse of work culture. The people of West Bengal were taught by political parties that they could always collect their pay packets without performing their duties. Agitation replaced governance, and the unemployed and the unemployable were given the assurance that they could always depend on the patronage of political parties. Governance became synonymous with populism.

Agitation and populism have made Bengal ungovernable. These two facets of politics also initiated a vicious cycle. They encouraged investment to flee, and this created the conditions of economic stagnation and unemployment, and these, in turn, intensified the politics of protest and populism. The only attempt to bring back investment to the state at the beginning of the 21st century by the communist chief minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, was prevented by an agitation led by Mamata Banerjee, who, as chief minister, has abandoned even the pretence of governing.

In terms of government, colours have changed; in terms of governance and the modalities of politics nothing has changed. Politicians and businessmen desirous of pleasing the government might attend or even climb summits. But Bengal will remain without investment because the state is in the stranglehold of lawlessness and populism. Bengal is an ungovernable state and has been so for a long time. It is a failed state because its political leadership has failed it; and the people, by again and again electing governments that are irresponsible, have also failed the state. The people of Bengal have facilitated the success of failure.

POVERTY

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 5, 2015

27% people in urban areas are poor, finds census

Moushumi Das Gupta

About 27.6% of 377 million people living in urban India, or 104 million people, have been identified as poor, according to preliminary figures of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC).

While the poor in rural India have been identified several times since 1999, this is the first time the urban poor have been identified.

Started in 2011 by the UPA government, the SECC is being conducted to identify families falling below the poverty line (BPL) in urban and rural areas. It is expected to help the government better target the poor for its welfare schemes. For example, it will enable a homeless household to be targeted for a housing scheme, while an unemployed person can be targeted under a livelihood scheme. The survey was conducted by the housing and urban poverty alleviation ministry in urban areas, while the rural development ministry was conducting the house-to-house exercise in rural areas.

About 14.63 per cent of 17 million people living in Delhi have been identified as poor. Of all the states and union territories, Manipur (43.06%) has the maximum number of poor people living in urban areas followed by Bihar (41.4%), Tripura (40.75%), Odisha (39.4%) and Mizoram (37.9%).

Prior to this census, the erstwhile Planning Commission had accepted a report of an expert group headed by Suresh Tendulkar that estimated the urban poverty ratio at 25.7% based on consumption expenditure.

The SECC has used a three-stage process recommended by a panel headed by former Planning Commission member SR Hashim to identify the urban poor. These are — automatic exclusion, automatic inclusion and scoring index — all based on social, occupational and residential vulnerability.

For example, a family stands to be automatically included as ‘poor’ if it does not have a home, or any income, or if the household is headed by a female or physically challenged person. Households having either a four-room house or in possession of any one of these assets — a four-wheeler, air conditioner and computer/laptop with Internet were automatically excluded. The third criteria is a scoring index that gives households scores from 0 to 12 based on their vulnerabilities with a higher score signifying more deprivation. Households that score 0 are ineligible to be included in the BPL list. The Union Cabinet needs to fix the cut-off score under which a household will be classified as ‘poor’. “The figures will go up marginally once the government decides up to what score a family will be included in the BPL list. We are going to the Cabinet soon to get the scoring list finalised,” said a housing and urban poverty alleviation ministry official.

RAILWAYS

INDIAN EXPRESS, JAN 2, 2015

Rail Reform 1: Minister won't decide on tenders

[Avishek G Dastidar](#)

In his first major move towards internal reforms of the Railways, minister Suresh Prabhu on Thursday formally gave away all his powers to decide on tenders. He empowered zonal railways and Railway Board members to take such calls from now on.

The move is aimed at speeding up the procurement process and bringing in more transparency. In an order issued late in the evening, the ministry made it clear that from now, tenders valuing up to Rs 500 crore, will be accepted at the level of Additional Members of Railway Board.

For tenders with values more than Rs 500 crore, Additional Members will form the Tender Committee for evaluation, while the Board Member concerned will be the tender accepting authority.

The Railway Minister and his office will thus, not have any role in any tender of Indian Railways any more. The approval of the President was received in this regard. This comes barely weeks after former Delhi Metro MD E Sreedharan suggested such a system in his report to Prabhu. The new system simplifies the process of evaluating tenders without losing the checks and balances.

According to official data, at present Railway Board members are handling 14 high-level tenders, involving a combined value of a whopping Rs 17,508 crore.

For the high-value tenders already lying at the minister's office, the Members are to now decide on them taking into account the comments and observations of the ministers already recorded in the files.

This effectively frees the minister and his staff of the task of deciding on each heavy duty tender file. In effect, it also insulates the political dispensation from any controversy arising out of procurement process in the future.

The internal order comes a day after the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet filled up eight vacant posts of zonal railway General Managers and Board Members. In his report to the minister, Sreedharan had criticised the government for keeping so many top-level posts vacant. He had argued that the process of delegating these powers to Board Members and GMs made little sense when most of such crucial posts were lying vacant.

“It is therefore questionable whether GMs should be delegated powers with regards to commercial decisions and tenders when posts of GMs are vacant,” Sreedharan had observed in his report.

Prabhu, it is learnt, played a crucial role in convincing the ACC and the PMO towards making the appointments by December 31 after months of impasse.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 5, 2015

Govt to soon roll out its 'Rurban' plan to bridge rural-urban gulf

Brajesh Kumar

The government is all set to roll out 'Rurban', a programme to fill the rural-urban divide, announced in the budget last year. With an aim of spending Rs. 6,000 crore over five years, the programme will focus on creating community assets and improving basic infrastructure such as roads, shelter, power and drinking water in rural India.

"We are ready with its blueprint and will take government's approval soon," rural development secretary, LC Goyal, told HT.

Lifted straight out of Gujarat, headed by Narendra Modi for three terms before he became the Prime Minister, the concept — launched in the state in 2012 — will see formation of a dedicated institutional set-up in the form of Rurban Cell under panchayat/ rural development department.

At the micro level, the programme will ensure building of internal roads, sewerage and drainage infrastructure. For larger infrastructure, like quality schools and colleges, health centres, etc, the government will adopt a cluster development strategy.

Announcing the programme in a joint session of Parliament in July last year, President Pranab Mukherjee said it would "provide urban amenities to rural areas while preserving the ethos of the villages".

"My government is committed to improving the quality of life in our villages, through empowered Panchayati Raj institutions," the President said. The Rurban scheme was launched after junking PURA, UPA government's pet project with similar aims, which failed to take off due to design flaws.

The scheme, envisioned by former president Abdul Kalam, aimed at providing street lights, drainage, roads, telecom lines in villages, was introduced in 2003 but found no takers as it lacked specific guidelines for operationalisation. In 2012, the project was revived but failed again.

TRANSPORT

INDIAN EXPRESS, JAN 7, 2015

Calling it a 'short cut', Govt says no to banning pvt vehicles older than 15 years

Utkarsh Anand

It may not be the end of the road for private vehicles which are more than 15 years old. The government on Tuesday opposed a proposal to ban such vehicles across the country, saying this was just a "short cut" formula to control pollution.

In its affidavit in the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said: "At present, the ministry does not propose to mandate the age limit of private vehicles because this is a short-cut approach... the fitness testing of the vehicle will prove whether a vehicle has reached the end of its life or not."

The ministry pointed out that this was the practice followed in the European countries and North America, where a fitness test is the yardstick for deciding whether a vehicle should be allowed to ply or not.

"The ministry, however, may consider 15 years as the period for end of life for transport and commercial vehicles," said the affidavit, which has been filed in response to a PIL. The PIL has been filed by activist M C Mehta and senior advocate Harish Salve appears as amicus curiae in the matter. On the last date of hearing, the court had sought a reply from the concerned ministries on the measures taken to curb vehicular pollution.

The ministry proposed that fitness tests for private vehicles should be conducted more often — once in five years for new vehicles and once in two-three years after the vehicles cross the 15-year mark. The current norms state that new vehicles should be tested once in 15 years, and vehicles older than 15 years must be tested once in five years.

The ministry also pointed out the need to set up more authorised test stations, on the lines of the developed countries.

According to the affidavit, the permanent solution lies in upgrading the emission norms, not in fixing an age limit for vehicles. “Upgrading the Bharat Stage from III to IV and IV to V... is the permanent solution for controlling pollution due to exhaust gases from vehicles. This is dependent upon the fallibility of automobile fuels,” it said.

Bharat Stage emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.

The ministry said only a comprehensive study could establish the actual share of vehicular pollution in degrading air quality.

The affidavit said the National Green Tribunal was already seized of a similar matter relating to Delhi. In its November 26 order, the tribunal had banned all vehicles which are more than 15 years old from plying on Delhi’s roads.

During the last hearing, Salve had argued that the implementation of strict measures to control vehicular pollution must begin from the national capital.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 2, 2015

Land ordinance: President Pranab Mukherjee had doubts on need for urgency

The Narendra Modi government's latest ordinance to amend the land law did not get an instant approval from President Pranab Mukherjee as he sought further clarification before promulgating it.

Rashtrapati Bhavan sources said that the President had called finance minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday evening, hours after the file related to the land bill was placed before the President.

While all earlier ordinances — eight in total — of the seven-month-old NDA government were promulgated by President automatically, the land ordinance saw the President posing some questions. During the UPA era, Mukherjee had refused to sign the ordinance to protect convicted lawmakers.

Following a short discussion with Jaitley, Mukherjee signed the ordinance on land acquisition on Wednesday night. (Photo credit: Twitter)

Top sources suggested that as the government had not brought any bill before parliament to change the land law before pushing the ordinance, the President wanted to be absolutely sure about the urgency of the government to bring an ordinance.

Government sources added that an ordinance was necessary as the right to fair compensation and transparency in land acquisition, rehabilitation and resettlement bill, 2013 act envisaged amending 13 other acts by December 31 to bring them at par with the compensation and rehabilitation provisions of the land law.

The ordinance brought all those exempted 13 Acts under the purview of the land act for the purpose of compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement, among other things. These acts are applicable for national highways, metro rail, atomic energy projects, defence establishments, electricity related other projects etc.

According to the Constitution, an ordinance can be promulgated by the President only after he is "satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action."

The Centre has also argued that the amendments to the land law were necessary to push stalled projects worth thousands of crores of Rupees.

BUSINESS LINE, JAN 5, 2015

From smart cities to climate smart cities

RANJAN K PANDA

Urban spaces are responsible for global warming and bear the brunt of it as well. They must evolve in sustainable ways

Bright future? Only if planners start thinking out of the box Ailisa/shutterstock.com
India is still unclear what its Prime Minister means when he talks about smart cities.

However, what everyone seems to be clear about is the fact that cities are defining the world's fate at the moment.

Increasingly being recognised as the only place for 'opportunities', cities invite more and more people to their fold, consume huge amount of energy, have heavy transport use, create more unnatural space by destroying natural ecosystems, and emit a lot of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

Cities claimed a good amount of time during the COP 20 (conference of the parties 20) debates in Lima. It is now evident that no climate action would be possible without taking cities on board.

At the receiving end

Lima saw one of the biggest gatherings of mayors and climate action experts so far.

This gathering stressed on strong local actions with participatory governance for building climate resilient cities. Mitigation and adaptation should be addressed with equal focus, it was felt, and initiatives that are under way were highlighted.

Cities, it is already evident, would be at the receiving end of climate impacts too.

They would face major impacts, more so because of the growing population camping in unplanned settlements.

Every week, the urban population increases by about one million inhabitants. More than half of them live in slums with inadequate facilities making them more vulnerable to problems caused by climate change.

Such pockets in cities are less resilient than parts which have better infrastructure and facilities.

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report rightly points out: "Many global risks of climate change are concentrated in urban areas."

Cities face the double challenge of keeping pace with urbanisation and adapting to climate change. They have to act fast.

New targets

In less than a year, in December 2015, a new international climate change agreement should be agreed upon in Paris at COP 21. Cities across the world should gear up to show that they can take the necessary steps to become climate smart.

Some examples are there to pave them the way.

Earlier this year, the Climate Alliance advocates in Europe resolved to take up three binding targets: 50 per cent less Co2, 40 per cent more energy efficiency and a 40 per cent share of renewable energy by 2020 with the objective of halving per capita Co2 emissions by 2030.

Many such local actions on energy savings, energy efficiency and renewable energy promotion would be helpful as examples for all cities.

A report shared during COP 20 points out that the Covenant of Mayors initiative, officially launched by the European Commission in 2008, has today exceeded all the initial expectations and has expanded far beyond the borders of the European Union. This initiative today includes more than 6,000 local authorities spread across 52 countries.

Covenant signatories have formally committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by more than 20 per cent by 2020.

What is remarkable about this initiative is the fact that each city is reported to have devised its own method.

Cities in India are growing mostly as concrete infrastructures at the cost of local biodiversity including rivers, water bodies and forests. They have to look within and find their indigenous solutions.

In designing our smart cities we should take cues from some of the global actions and most of our local knowledge and realities.

In the name of growth and modernity, ironically, many governments are adopting city plans from environmentally unsustainable cities.

This has to stop. Locally adapted plans that the local people can sustain should be adopted to make our cities climate smart.

The writer is the convenor of Combat Climate Change Network, India

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 1, 2015

Delhi set to get 3 smart cities in 2015

Neelam Pandey

It will be a happy, new Delhi in 2015. In the next few months, work will begin on three smart cities, with 20 lakh flats built in an organised urban set-up equipped with all amenities and guided by technology.

To come up on the Capital's outskirts — extension of Dwarka in southwest Delhi, Rohini and Narela in the northwest — these cities will be modeled after the group housing concept, with uninterrupted power, water and wi-fi connectivity.

Hospitals, schools, commercial complexes, green spaces and energy-efficient structures would be the other features.

“There are four zones in the city which will be developed on the concept of smart cities. These cities would have world-class infrastructure and facilities. The scheme is likely to take off early 2015,” DDA vice-chairman Balvinder Kumar told HT.

REDRAWING CITY'S LANDSCAPE

Three smart cities to come up on Delhi's outskirts – Dwarka and Rohini extension, Narela



The map shows the outline of Delhi in green. Three yellow circles with arrows point to specific locations: Rohini Extn in the northwest, Narela in the north, and Dwarka Extn in the southwest.

- The three self-sustainable sub-cities will house 2 million flats
- Modelled along the lines of group housing societies, these will have 24x7 water, power, wi-fi connectivity
- Pvt developers, who will build the apartments, will also have to provide amenities such as parking lots, schools and hospitals
- DDA will be responsible for creating infrastructure — road network, sewage and water treatment plants and green spaces
- Will come up on 20,000-24,000 hectares -- each new sub-city could be the size of Dwarka
- Norms changed to allow 24 floors. At present, residential blocks can't go beyond 12 storeys
- Work expected to begin early 2015

Smart cities are Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream project, an ambitious plan to set up 100 such urban settlements across the country. He promised them while campaigning for the Lok Sabha and sees them a step towards improving governance.

In Delhi, private developers will build the cities and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) infrastructure. These will come up on 20,000-24,000 hectares — simply put, each new sub-city will be the size of Dwarka.

The cities will scale new heights. Norms have been modified to allow residential blocks to rise as high as 24 floors, sources said. At present, apartment blocks can only go up to 12 floors.

Regulations of land polling had been approved by the DDA and the Delhi government had already initiated the exercise of changing the land use from rural to urban, sources said. The regulations have been sent to the urban development ministry and once they are approved, work will begin.

Locals/developers would offer land parcels, and the DDA would create basic infrastructure, officials said. The DDA would then handover the land to developers responsible for providing residential and commercial complexes, hospitals, schools, parking lots and green spaces, officials said.

A smart city is a self-sustainable unit relying more on renewable energy with integration of green spaces, residential and commercial areas, connected through a web of roads. Emphasis is also on minimising waste by increasing energy efficiency and reducing water conservation.

“We are going to appoint a consultant to provide ICT (information and communication technology)-enabled services in the entire process till the occupancy certificate is given to individual applicants,” a senior official said.

WOMEN

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 1, 2015

PM Narendra Modi to launch 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programme from Haryana

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar today said the Prime Minister, in his first visit after the formation of BJP government in Haryana.

CHANDIGARH: [Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) will launch 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programme, a nationwide scheme aimed to address the dipping child sex ratio and empower girl child in the country, from Panipat in Haryana next month.

Haryana Chief Minister [Manohar Lal Khattar](#) today said the Prime Minister, in his first visit after the formation of BJP government in Haryana, would launch the programme from Panipat in Haryana on January 22.

The nationwide programme 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' is in the direction of preventing unfavorable impact of declining sex ratio in the country and also to sort out this serious trouble, Khattar said in a release here.

The prime objective of this programme was to bring a change in people mindset towards girl child on or after her birth. Preventing determination of sex, female foeticide, ensuring safety of girls, their best possible care and providing quality education are integral part of this programme, he added.

Khattar said a national level media and multi-sectoral campaigns in 100 districts in the country would also be carried out under the programme.

'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programme would be implemented in 12 districts of Haryana namely Mahendergarh, Jhajjar, Sonapat, Rewari, Ambala, Kurukshetra, Rohtak, Karnal, Yamunanagar, Kaithal, Bhiwani and Panipat which have the lower girl child sex ratio.

The Chief Minister said a two-day seminar-cum-conference would also be organised on the beginning of the programme on January 20 and 21 next month.

He said [Gujarat Chief Minister](#) Anandiben Patel, Rajasthan Chief Minister [Vasundhara Raje](#) and [West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee](#) would be special invitee in the seminar.

Besides, [women](#) and child development ministers and Principal Secretaries concerned of all states have also been invited to express their views in the seminar.