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ECONOMIC TIMES

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

HINDU

HINDUSTAN TIMES

INDIAN EXPRESS

PIONEER

TELEGRAPH

TIMES OF INDIA

TRIBUNE

CONTENTS

CIVIL SERVICE	3-17
CONSTITUTIONS	18
EDUCATION	19-20
EMINENT PERSONALITIES	21-23
INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETIES	24-25
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	26-28
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	29
JUDICIARY	30-32
LIBRARIES	33-37
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	38
ORGANIZATIONS	39-41
POPULATION	42-43
PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM	44
RAILWAYS	45
RELIGION	46
TAXATION	47-49
URBAN DEVELOPMENT	50
WOMEN	51

CIVIL SERVICE

ASIAN AGE, JAN 31, 2015

Working of External Affairs Ministry needs much reform

By Vivek Katju

The government's decision to curtail Sujatha Singh's term and appoint S Jaishanker has come as no surprise. It was widely known that there was little chemistry between the political leadership and Singh.

It was also known that the Prime Minister thought highly of Jaishanker who did well as India's Ambassador to the US.

It is necessary that prime minister and external affairs minister should have confidence in the secretaries of the MEA, especially the foreign secretary. Hence, while it is unusual for them to be changed mid-term, it has been done thrice in the past when foreign secretaries Jagat Mehta, AP Venkateswaran and SK Singh were removed from their posts. In the case of Venkateswaran, however, it was done by Rajiv Gandhi in a particularly offensive manner and the foreign service rose in revolt. Much is being made of the timing of the appointment of Jaishanker.

The fact is that once it was decided that President Obama would be chief guest for the Republic Day, it would have been improper to change Jaishanker prior to the conclusion of the visit.

Much reform is needed in the working of the MEA. The morale of the foreign service is low and there is also the feeling in official circles that the ministry has been edged out of its rightful role in the making of critical foreign and security policy decisions. Some of the space can be retrieved with a handpicked foreign secretary but not all. That will require a radical departure in the way the Ministry functions especially at the senior most diplomatic levels.

The foreign secretary is only the first among equals. The three other secretaries do not report to him.

They are independently responsible for the work allotted to them. All the secretaries should work cohesively but in reality work in silos.

Also, the workload has become extensive. This needs to be changed. The way forward is to distribute work more rationally among secretaries and create a formal committee of secretaries in the MEA chaired by foreign secretary that will consider important cross cutting issues. The structure of the Railway Board offers an example that can be followed in this context.

Modi has imparted great energy to India's external engagement. The government is being taken seriously abroad on account of Modi's decisive popular mandate.

This is the time to actively push the diplomatic agenda with imagination and skill. The MEA has to play a central role in this national endeavour but will be unable to do so if it continues with a business as usual attitude.

Will Jaishanker display the confidence to begin the change starting with the contours of his own direct responsibilities?

The author is former secretary (West) MEA & ex-ambassador to Afghanistan

ASIAN AGE, JAN 30, 2015

Foreign secy sacking shows lack of grace

Such actions are likely to hurt the morale of a professional cadre. The new leader of the foreign office is thus taking charge in inauspicious circumstances which are not of his own making

The government summarily discharged foreign secretary Sujatha Singh on Wednesday, cutting her fixed tenure of two years short by six months, and replaced her with S. Jaishankar, until Wednesday our ambassador in Washington.

Both officers are first class. So, it is not about individuals but about institutions. While a government has the prerogative to choose the head of a service, its action became conspicuous for its astounding lack of grace. Actions such as these are likely to hurt the morale of a professional cadre. The new leader of the foreign office is thus taking charge in inauspicious circumstances which are not of his own making.

The Sujatha Singh incident brings to mind the sacking of foreign secretary A.P. Venkateswaran at a press conference by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, an event that had created tremors in the establishment. The present episode is equally destructive of the elan of a fine body of international affairs professionals in a service that is tiny in size and for that reason calls upon each of its members to go the extra mile and produce quality outcomes.

In this unseemly turn of events, fingers are pointing at Prime Minister Modi himself. The grapevine suggests that the PM was impressed with Mr Jaishankar when he was our ambassador in China, and more recently in the US, and was apparently not so taken up with the working ways of Ms Singh. But working on the basis of personal chemistry has in this case downsized an institution, and been unfair to a competent professional. That's not the way of a mature country.

It cannot but be remembered that the foreign secretary's sacking has come on the heels of a very successful visit of a foreign dignitary of the order of the US President, on which the Prime Minister had staked so much. This is not an object lesson likely to impress younger professionals in government, many of whom would have worked extraordinarily hard, and delivered. It is being said that Mr Modi wanted to elevate Mr Jaishankar in a hurry as the latter was due to retire in two days. This is a limp explanation. To achieve the same result, Mr Jaishankar's term in Washington could have been extended by a few months until the incumbent foreign secretary retired.

Mr Jaishankar takes charge under onerous conditions. He will have a tenure of two years from the date of assuming charge "or until further orders". This is whimsical. It means his term could be whittled down. The heads of other services now have a fixed tenure. The IFS thus stands differently treated.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 30, 2015

Getting ready for the world: PM, new foreign secy should get going

S Jaishankar is considered the architect of the Indo-US nuclear deal of 2008, and the man behind recent breakthrough on its operationalisation.

Foreign secretary S Jaishankar took over at the ministry of external affairs on Wednesday after his predecessor Sujatha Singh's tenure was summarily "curtailed". Mr Jaishankar comes with impressive credentials, including a PhD in nuclear diplomacy and tenures in Moscow, Tokyo and Colombo, besides being an envoy to Beijing and Washington. He has a lot of experience in handling the great powers, which will demand a lot of MEA attention. South Block now has the rare instance of having a capable foreign secretary being backed by a strong prime minister. Manmohan Singh had rated thinkers like Shyam Saran and Shivshankar Menon as foreign secretaries but did not have the authority to drive through the changes that the MEA needs to match the demands of today's diplomacy. The PM and Mr Jaishankar have a packed calendar ahead but they must pay particular attention to our woefully inadequate diplomatic capacity. Analysts have pointed out that India has around 1,000 diplomats which is far fewer than Britain, that has over 6,000, and China that has around 7,500 diplomats. The MEA has increased intake recently but only at the entry level. Secondment of specialists from other ministries to the MEA occurs but also does not correspond to need.

The lateral entry of experts from other spheres up to the joint secretary level is an idea that has been around for a while but has not taken off owing to resistance from other services. The PM, who swiftly jettisoned the Planning Commission, must cut through this inertia and take on the task of building the MEA's capacity. The civil service may need to

consider crafting a special entrance process for the IFS that selects candidates with suitable competencies — and will have to introduce incentives that can attract both young and experienced professionals.

MEA engagement with the public on social media is good and its outreach to academia has improved; it now uses think-tanks more effectively to socialise policy positions and source ideas. But the ministry is some way away from efficiently appropriating available expertise from beyond its corridors. The MEA should streamline engagement with academia and in turn develop India's foreign affairs scholarship by declassifying the diplomatic archive more expansively and quickly. There is an ongoing declassification process but the quality and volume of material is yet to create a buzz among historians. The West, in particular, has used the public record to encourage debate and ultimately strengthen its democracies. We must too.

BUSINESS LINE, JAN 29, 2015

AP babus to get a crash course on Joyful Living

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation to conduct workshop

Senior officials and politicians in the Andhra Pradesh government are gearing up for a three-day crash course on 'Inner engineering — for joyful living' to be conducted by the Isha Foundation, run by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. Around 300 people, including ministers and government officials from the IAS, IPS and IFS cadres, will take part in the Master Class programme to be held from January 29-31.

The idea is to incorporate yoga and meditation into work schedules, thereby helping the government officials to reduce stress.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will be at the inaugural session on January 29 and also participate in a session with the Sadhguru on January 31, the closing day of the programme.

The workshop is aimed at equipping the officials with multitasking skills, handling stress with calm and clarity, and improving communication and relationships through a better understanding of others.

According to Naidu, the programme is a team-building exercise that will give clarity of thought, help maintain work-life balance and increase the happiness quotient of officials. The chief minister believes this will eventually lead to improvement in governance and administration.

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 29, 2015

Modi govt sacks foreign secretary Sujatha Singh, replaces her with envoy to US S Jaishankar

[Indrani Bagchi](#)

NEW DELHI: A day after Barack Obama flew out of India, the Modi government on late Wednesday evening announced the abrupt "curtailment of tenure of foreign secretary Sujatha Singh with immediate effect" — a not very polite way of saying it was sacking her eight months before she was due to retire.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's ambassador to the US, who's a batch junior to Singh in the service, will be the new foreign secretary.

Singh is the first foreign secretary to be removed unceremoniously after Rajiv Gandhi removed AP Venkateswaran 28 years ago in 1987.

From all accounts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been unimpressed with Singh and her work, and had made no secret of it in the past months. There had been talk of a change for some time, but foreign minister Sushma Swaraj is said to have wanted Singh to stay on.

The decision was finally taken to remove her after the Obama visit. Jaishankar was earlier needed in Washington to lay the groundwork for what Modi wanted to be two back-to-back headline-grabbing summits.

Jaishankar's appointment promises sweeping changes to the ministry of external affairs. In the past six months, no ambassadorial appointments have been cleared by the government. The MEA had sent in recommendations but they were not cleared by the PMO, partly because the PM wanted to make the changes at the helm first.

A slew of ambassadorial and joint secretary changes are waiting to be made which are now likely to go through. Among the first decisions will be to appoint a successor to Jaishankar in Washington DC.

Jaishankar will start work on Thursday, and in the first week of February will preside over the first heads of mission meeting called during the NDA government. He is expected to get a freer hand in MEA because the PM believes he can take out-of-the-box decisions.

No.36/01/2015-EO(SM-I)
Government of India
Secretariat of the
Appointments Committee of the Cabinet
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
Department of Personnel and Training

New Delhi, 28th January, 2015

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the following:

- (i) Curtailment of tenure of Ms. Sujatha Singh, IFS.76 as Foreign Secretary with immediate effect;
- (ii) Appointment of Dr. S. Jaishankar, IFS.77 as Foreign Secretary vice Ms. Sujatha Singh, IFS.76, with a tenure of two years from the date of assumption of charge or until further orders, whichever is earlier, in keeping with the provisions of FR 56(d).

28/1/15
Sharma
(B.P. Sharma)
Secretary

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

A copy of the government letter ordering the removal of Sujatha Singh as foreign secretary and appointing S Jaishankar in her place.

Jaishankar was frontrunner to become foreign secretary in 2013, and was a personal choice of former PM Manmohan Singh. However, Manmohan could not have his way as Sonia Gandhi had the last word with Sujatha Singh's appointment.

Singh's father was former IB chief TV Rajeshwar, an old Congress party loyalist.

An officer of the 1977 batch of the Indian Foreign Service, Jaishankar is the son of strategic guru K Subrahmanyam, a former consulting editor with The Times of India. He was ambassador to China and before that ambassador to Singapore and the Czech Republic.

TRIBUNEN JAN 28, 2015

No free ride for state ministers, babus

Austerity measure

- State government to charge officers and ministers ~400 a month for first 400 km of personal journeys in official vehicle
- Rs 4/km to be charged for excess of 400 km a month
- New instructions part of government's austerity drive
- Officials using own vehicles for official work to be reimbursed Rs 4/km
- Rate for non-official use of government vehicles for private journeys fixed at Rs 4/km

Pradeep Sharma

There will be no free ride for ministers and senior bureaucrats in the state.

From January 22, senior government functionaries, including ministers, bureaucrats, heads of the departments and OSDs to the chief minister, who have official vehicles attached to them, will have to shell out Rs 400 per month for non-official journeys, including journeys between residence and office, for the first 400 km. This was stated in a circular issued by the Chief Secretary's Office said.

The circular, which is seen as part of the austerity measures by the Khattar government, said for private journeys in "excess of the permissible limit of 400 km", the concerned official would have to make cash payment at the end of the month.

"The amount of Rs 400 will be deducted from the salaries of the officers unless the officer concerned submitted in writing that he had not been provided with any such vehicle and he did not use it for private use," the new instructions read.

Sources said the new instructions were the offshoot of a large-scale misuse of official vehicles for "private purposes" by various functionaries of the state government in the recent years. "Besides, it is also a part of state government's effort to reduce wasteful expenditure," a senior officer said.

Meanwhile, the state government has revised the rate for reimbursement to government officials using personal vehicles for official purposes. The rate for the official journey performed by personal vehicles would now be Rs 4 per km instead of Rs 2 per km. Similarly, the rate for non-official use of government vehicles for private journeys would also be Rs 4 per km

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 29, 2015

Government mulls action against evangelist IAS officer C Umashankar

CHENNAI: After directing state commissioner for disciplinary proceedings C Umashankar not to "preach or propagate" his faith, the Tamil Nadu government is considering its future course of action against the officer who has been challenging the government's decision openly in the media. A senior official in the government said, "We sought legal opinion before sending the directive to Umashankar. Though many senior officials in the government wanted the officer suspended, we wanted to give him some more time. But his continuous interviews and media debates have embarrassed the government."

Since Umashankar is openly charging that the government is acting at the behest of Hindutva groups, the government is discussing the pros and cons of further action against him. "He has been deliberately giving a communal angle to the government's directive. But the government acted based on reports from the Kanyakumari district administration over the disturbance to public order there," the official said.

Sources said the government had sent a show-cause notice a few months back but Umashankar didn't respond. "When he wanted to go to South Africa for preaching, the government sent that notice. It is still pending," an official said.

Umashankar maintains the government is targeting him only because he is preaching Christianity. "I will continue preaching. I will face the government legally. The government aligned with right wing groups and took this action," Umashankar told TOI.

Retired IAS officer and leader of Samuga Samathuva Padai, P Sivakami, said she may file a petition supporting Umashankar if he challenges the government in court. "Hindutva forces planned to create communal unrest in Tamil Nadu for their political gains in the coming election. So they targeted Umashankar. The government's action is biased. Hindu officers have been delivering religious discourses in the name of literature," Sivakami said.

Umashankar's remarks - "Not constitution, for Hindus Gita comes first, for Muslims Quran first, for Christians Bible comes first -- have created a debate in social media. "People attending my prayers got healed. I have no power but it is the power of Jesus," he said. Umashankar's earlier remarks that the formula for success in life is Jesus Christ and disasters were a sign of wrath of gods on sinners have also received critical comments.

Hindu Munnani (Hindu front) on Wednesday wanted his ouster from the government. "The government should dismiss him and take action against him for conversions," it said in a statement.

Ezra Sargunam, a bishop of the Evangelical Church of India, said Umashankar has the right to share his faith and experience. Only the Hindutva forces are creating a law and order problem, not Umashankar, he said.

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 28, 2015

Gag order on IAS officer draws fire

[Karthick S](#)

CHENNAI: The recent government order gagging IAS officer C Umashankar from "preaching and propagating" was likely only the flash point of an issue that has been simmering for a while.

Born a Hindu dalit, Umashankar says he changed his faith to Christianity. He has recently been holding prayer meetings and conducting faith-healing sessions in various parts of the state, triggering resentment among right wing Hindu groups that have campaigned against him.

Never one to shy away from articulating his convictions publicly, Umashankar has been holding forth on the internet - including through YouTube videos - about his new faith.

In August, a writ petition was filed in Madurai high court saying he was misusing his position as a civil servant to promote Christianity . Official sources say the government warned Umashankar at that time.

On Jan 16, a prayer meeting that he addressed in Kanyakumari led to a fracas after which a case was filed. While the police blame him for not being mindful of communal sensitivities in the district, sources close to Umashankar claim the police were to blame for the trouble.

On Saturday , the government wrote to him asking him not to propagate his religion since it was creating a law and order problem. The government charged him with inappropriate conduct.

Umashankar's run-ins with the powers that be are not new. A crusader against corruption, he took on powerful politicians in DMK and AIADMK. He blew the lid on the cremation shed scam that led to the conviction of former AIADMK minister T M Selvaganapathy.

He proposed the setting up of a state-run cable corporation that would upend Sumangali Cable Vision controlled by the Maran brothers.

Umashankar doesn't seem fazed by the chief secretary's recent letter to him. He says he would approach a higher forum to appeal against the order.

He contends that the Constitution guarantees not just freedom to follow a religion but also to propagate it. The word "propagate" was inserted into the Constitution since some members of the Constituent assembly argued that proselytizing is a core aspect of some religions and so freedom to follow those religions includes the right to propagate them.

Umashankar's rather public religious activities - a feature of his denomination - may well be the issue here. Critics, however, say that fundamental rights are subject to reasonable restrictions.

Freedom of religion is governed by certain legal and societal norms, they say. And open propagation of a religion by civil servants would seriously undermine their impartiality and their image.

"Civil servants are expected to be neutral and unbiased and treat all religions and people equally . Everyone has the right to practice their religion but preaching cannot be accepted from civil servants," said former chief election commissioner, T S Krishnamurthy .

Retired Union cabinet secretary T S R Subramanian says that just as a civil servant should get prior permission from the government before writing for a newspaper, he should get prior permission before speaking in public. "The Constitution permits freedom of expression but service rules cannot be overlooked," he said.

Umashankar counters this and says Constitutional rights supersede service rules. While interacting with the media, TNCC chief EVKS Elangovan said on Monday that if an individual preaches there is no problem but if he uses his official position then he stands condemned. In reply, Umashankar says he was attending prayer meetings only during the weekends.

Justice Chandru, retired judge of Madras high court, says that while it may very well be correct to expect civil servants to not publicly propagate a religion, the practice of Indian secularism has never meant strong separation from religion.

"There are Vinayaka temples inside court campuses. Saraswathi pooja is performed in the court. Some Muslim judges go for prayers during working hours on Fridays. There is a separate place for Muslims to pray in high court campus. The government funds the Kailash trip and Haj. And a non-Hindu can't be made chairman of HR & CE board," he adds.

If none of these is a problem then why should Umashankar's preaching be one, asks Chandru and wonders if such things get noticed only when the concerned person is from a minority community . "When the government has no consistent policy on religious

issues, nor does it have specific conduct rules, denying the right to preach or propagate a particular religion is not correct," he said.

Umashankar too argues along similar lines. "I have been preaching for years. Why has this come now? The BJP government is in power in Delhi. You can draw your own conclusions," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS, JAN 27, 2015

Govt staff can now visit Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives on LTC

By: Sharmistha Mukherjee

The civil aviation ministry has given its nod to a proposal to provide leave travel concession for government employees to Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka to boost tourism in the region.

A senior official in the ministry confirming the development said, "The move is intended to boost tourism within SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries. Pakistan and Bangladesh has been left out for now because of security issues." The approval from the ministry of civil aviation was required so that the LTC can be availed of on national carrier Air India while flying to these countries.

Interestingly, latest available official data shows that there has been a decline in foreign tourist arrivals from Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka in 2013.

Sri Lanka does feature among the top five countries accounting for 3.77 per cent of foreign tourist arrivals in India. However, tourist arrivals from Sri Lanka to India dropped by 11 per cent in 2013.

Similarly, arrivals from Nepal declined by 9 per cent, Bhutan by 1 per cent. Foreign tourist arrivals from Maldives went down by 10 per cent in the same period.

The LTC scheme extended to the four identified countries will be designed akin to those for travel to Jammu & Kashmir and to the North-East.

The measure, government official say, will enhance tourism and subsequently economic development in the South Asian region.

"There are around two million government employees. With the extension of the LTC scheme there is bound to be greater tourist inflow and outflow with these countries", added the official.

In the 18th SAARC Summit held in Nepal in November last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had emphasised the need for enhancing connectivity in the region, saying it was easier to travel to Bangkok and Singapore than to countries in the neighbourhood.

There is a significant population of Buddhists in the SAARC region and India has lately been making attempts to boost tourism such places of religious significance like Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kapilavastu.

At the summit, Modi had in fact flagged off a bus service connecting Kathmandu with New Delhi.

INDIAN EXPRESS, JAN 27, 2015

With 150 retirements a month, DDA hiring law, CA graduates

Written by [Shalini Narayan](#)

With many employees retiring from Delhi's premier land-owning agency, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is in for a paradigm shift as it has begun hiring young professionals on a contractual basis. Officials said while 50 vacancies in two departments have already been filled up by this new move, more such personnel will be hired in the next four months.

Reportedly, the selection committee responsible for engaging new recruits has been given instructions to focus on engaging fresh graduates or post-graduates from the fields of law, chartered accountancy and management.

According to DDA officials, nearly 1,800 employees have retired in just a year. Currently, there are 15,000 employees in the department. Data available with the DDA also shows that nearly 60 per cent of the employees are above the age of 50 years and approximately 150 employees are retiring every month.

"The strength has now come down to 13,200. We estimate that in the next three years, nearly 30 per cent of the employees will have retired. An analysis has shown that while a regular selection process has engaged good working professionals, the idea of a permanent job somewhere influences a person's working and efficiency. So, we have decided that if young professionals are hired on a contractual basis, they will be motivated to work hard in the hope that they will get permanent positions," a senior official said.

Reportedly, the regular selection process includes a written exam and an interview. Officials said 50 employees, with an average age of 30 years, have already been hired on a contractual basis in the finance and law departments.

The DDA will now engage more contract-based employees in the planning and architecture departments in the next four months.

Explaining how a contract-based job offer would attract more takers, a senior official said, "Fresh graduates bring in more ideas. They are willing to apply since these are government jobs, which guarantee job security. Even though each recruitment is through a regular process, the DDA has the discretion to hire employees on a contract basis through walk-in-interviews as well," the official said. We have noticed that whenever we

advertise for a vacant post, there are hundreds of applications. Even law or management graduates are willing to apply. Their contracts may be extended to permanent positions depending on their quality of work.”

DDA vice-chairman Balwinder Kumar, said, “This will make employees more receptive to general public issues. Efficiency and quality of work will also improve.”

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 27, 2015

Counselling to improve efficiency of Forest staff

Bosky Khanna

The Forest department will conduct counselling sessions for range forest officers, watchers, guards and all lower-rung staff, who form the backbone of the department, to understand their problems and improve their work efficiency.

Also, many officials working in territorial divisions will be brought back to the wildlife division, so that the staff strength in the forest areas is enhanced.

Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Ramanath Rai has given his nod for the proposal, which was pending before him for the last couple of months. The proposal has gained momentum after the tiger census report was released by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the National Tiger Conservation Authority on January 20.

As per the report, India houses 2,226 tigers of which Karnataka has the largest population of 406, making it the number one among all the 19 tiger states.

“To ensure better protection of staff, forests and wildlife, some plans have been chalked out, including counselling for ground forest staff. Counselling for all RFOs and those below is important and will start soon.

Marked improvement will be noticed within six months in the department. To further strengthen ground staff, around 2,500 forest guards will be recruited. We are also working towards making contract labourers permanent and bringing back many officials from the territorial division to the wildlife division,” Rai told Deccan Herald.

Forest department officials said counselling was important because many officials wished to leave wildlife posts citing work pressure, having to stay away from family, patrolling by foot for long distances without protection and weapons, covering over 50 sq km a day, dealing with poachers and facing life-threatening situations.

They also face the wrath of farmers during man-animal conflict. Many times, they face the fury of villagers when there is a casualty because of animal attack. Thus, many a time, the ground staff quit their job or seek transfer to social forestry or territorial divisions, which are safer spots.

Though the MoEF has made it mandatory that freshers should serve in forests for at least five years, many do not. They use political influence and get transferred.

In Karnataka, forests are spread across 40 lakh hectares, of which 40 per cent is tiger habitat and protected forest. The sanctioned strength for the number of guards is 3,994, but the actual strength is 3,081.

There are 1,865 deputy range forest officers (DRFOs) against the sanctioned strength of 2,295. There are 672 RFOs against the sanctioned strength of 765. Of these, 165 are newly recruited. There are 261 assistant conservators of forests against the sanctioned strength of 249.

Thirty of them are newly recruited. There are 112 deputy conservators of forests (DCFs) against the sanctioned strength of 72. A total of 40 of the DCFs are on deputation.

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 27, 2015

**IFS officer accuses senior colleagues of misusing funds
Claims they misclassified 30,000 poles as timber; complains to Lokayukta**

An Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer has made a complaint to the Lokayukta about some of his senior colleagues misusing office and misappropriating funds by inflating bills in the tree-felling project through another state-owned entity, the Karnataka State Forest Industries Corporation (KSFIC).

The officers produced inflated bills in violation of the Karnataka Forest, Account Codes and Sanctioned Schedule of Rates (SSR).

The complaint pertains to the Shivamogga division only and has been transferred to the Lokayukta police for investigation. The complainant is IFS officer Sudarshan G A, who is Conservator of Forests and Secretary of Malnad Area Development Board in Shivamogga.

He has named the Head of Forest Force and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), G V Sugur, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Kishan Singh Sugara, Chief Conservator of Forests (Shivamogga Circle) Smita Bijjur, former Deputy Conservator of Forest (Shivamogga division) K V Mallikarjuna, PCCF and Managing Director of Karnataka State Forest Industries Corporation Kanwar Pal and two other officials.

Sudarshan alleged that the KSFIC was used as conduit to siphon off government funds in Shivamogga division. The timber bills were inflated by misclassifying poles as timber and causing loss to the state exchequer.

Agreements

The Forest Department has entered into agreements with the KSFIC for felling of trees. The Karnataka Forest Code mandates that a material be classified as per the code to prevent loss to the State government. A material with mid girth of 80 cms is classified as timber, otherwise it has to be categorised as pole.

The agreement between the department and the KSFIC has classified poles as timber only to escalate the bill.

The complainant has submitted documents for misappropriation relating to one of the logging areas, 'Agasadi' in the Thirthahalli range of Shivamogga division.

The SSR stipulates a lower cost of extraction charges for the poles, hence every piece was considered timber in the instant case. From the depot receipts, it was found that more than 90 per cent of the materials were classified as timber whereas most of the materials were actually different types of poles.

The complainant further claimed that payments were made in 2013-14 without the mandatory sanctioned rates and without any estimation.

Loss of up to Rs 1 crore

“The KSFIC has felled a total of 16,590 trees, yielding about 40,000 pieces in the same scale. The complainant has stated that even if 30,000 poles have been misclassified as timber, a conservative amount unnecessarily charged to the state exchequer in one division for one year would be Rs 60 lakh to Rs one crore.

It is also alleged that the amount sanctioned does not match the payment made to the KSFIC,” a Lokayukta official said and added that an FIR would be registered in the case.

CONSTITUTIONS

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 31, 2015

I&B ministry directed to use image of 'amended' Preamble only

NEW DELHI: In the backdrop of the row over a government ad displaying a picture of the "original" Preamble which did not have the words 'secular' and 'socialist', the I&B Ministry has now decided that in future ads image of only the amended version of the Preamble will be used.

Officials said that I&B minister Arun Jaitley has directed the ministry to see that from now on government advertisements should use the 1976 version of the Preamble to the Constitution where the words 'secular' and 'socialist' were added.

"We have been asked by the I&B minister to see that in future, amended version of the Preamble to the Constitution is used in advertisements," a senior official said.

A row had earlier erupted over a Republic Day advertisement issued by the I&B ministry which carried a picture of the Preamble to the Constitution as it appeared before the 42nd Amendment, without the words 'secular' and 'socialist'.

The government had to face criticism from some quarters over the advertisement.

Congress leader and former Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Manish Tewari attacked the Centre on the issue, claiming the government advertisement "deleted" the two words, which was only a prelude to their "substitution" with "communal" and "corporate".

Minister of State for I&B Rajyavardhan Rathore, however, was quick to dismiss the charge, saying his ministry had only used an "original" picture of the Preamble as it appeared before the Amendment, to "honour" the first Preamble.

Rathore had said that while some people were trying to rake a controversy, the ministry had only used a picture of the Preamble when the Constitution was first adopted.

EDUCATION

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 28, 2015

Central University of Bihar to be rechristened as Central University of South Bihar

[B K Mishra](#)

PATNA: The Central University of Bihar (CUB) will now be known as the Central University of South Bihar (CUSB). A notification to this effect has already been published in the Gazette of India on December 18 last year.

Announcing this at the Republic Day celebrations organized by CUB here on Monday, registrar Mohammad Nehal said necessary amendment for changing the name has already been made in the Central Universities' Act, 2009. He said the name of the university has been changed on account of the territorial jurisdiction of its permanent campus at Gaya which is located south of the Ganga river in Bihar.

The registrar further said the first phase of construction of the university's building at Gaya would be started in a couple of months. The construction of almost half of its boundary wall has been completed and the remaining portion is likely to be completed in the next three to four months, he said.

Students from both Patna and Gaya campuses presented cultural programmes, including music, dance and drama, after the hoisting of the national tricolor. The winners of cricket and badminton competitions were awarded trophies.

Unfurling the national flag at the centralized R-Day celebrations at Patna Science College grounds, Patna University vice-chancellor Y C Simhadri called upon the students and faculty members to discharge their duties sincerely for ensuring all-round development of our nation. Boys and girls from different colleges of PU, namely, Patna Science College, Patna College, Magadh Mahila College and Patna Women's College presented variety of entertainment programme on the occasion.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 27, 2015

HRD ministry to set rules for 'adjunct' faculty

[Brajesh Kumar](#)

The government's move will address the problem of huge number of vacancies in IITs and other universities.

The government could soon set rules for hiring professionals from the industry as 'adjunct' faculty in higher educational institutions, including Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT).

The rules, the sources said, will make clear the qualifications required, salary to be paid and duration for which the faculty has to be hired. “A draft of consolidated instructions on the hiring of adjunct faculty has been sent to all higher educational institutions for their comments,” a senior HRD ministry official told HT.

A successful practice abroad the idea of adjunct faculty is aimed at helping students get industry experience. While most institutions have provisions to hire adjunct faculties, they have sparingly utilised them due to lack of clarity, the official said.

The draft is likely to make a masters degree (instead of PhD) as the minimum educational qualification to teach in institutions.

The move will address the problem of huge number of vacancies in IITs and other universities.

EMINENT PERSONALITIES

TELEGRAPH, JAN 27, 2015

A homegrown liberal

Rajni Kothari (1928-2015)

Partha Chatterjee

I first met Rajni Kothari in 1973 when, as a callow researcher with a recently secured doctorate, I went to Delhi looking for a job. He was in his office in what was then a single-storied bungalow on Rajpur Road that housed the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, known to academics as "Kothari's institute". I knew Kothari from his book, *Politics in India* (1970), which I had used to teach a course on Indian politics at the American university where I had done my PhD. The prevailing orthodoxy at the time among American political scientists writing on what was called political development - that is to say, the politics of developing countries - was that the modernization of State institutions and laying the foundations of capitalist enterprise must come first; democracy could wait. The preference for authoritarian modernization was barely concealed in the writings of influential political scientists such as David Apter and Samuel Huntington. Although Kothari's book appeared in an American series on Comparative Politics dominated by such views, his approach had struck me as significantly different.

He described the Indian political system as one of consensus-building, marked by a federal state structure as well as a federally organized ruling party. Even though the Congress party thoroughly dominated the system, it allowed for the articulation of a variety of contradictory interests within its own organization and had evolved democratic mechanisms for arriving at decisions that reflected a broad consensus.

Even though I had my reservations on what seemed to me Kothari's overly optimistic consensual model of the Congress system, I was pleasantly surprised by his generosity in listening to my undoubtedly poorly formulated and perhaps dogmatic criticism of the entire history of Congress rule since Independence. He asked me, in the kindest of tones, a few searching questions on my plans for further research on Indian politics. I said something about working on modern Indian intellectual history. I doubt very much that what I said made much sense to him - justifiably so, since I did not then have too many sensible research ideas myself. He didn't have a job to offer me but asked me to talk to Ashis Nandy who, he said, was a young man doing interesting new work. Nandy was not around. My first visit to CSDS came to a rather uneventful end.

Over the next few years, as I settled down to a life in Indian academia, I became acquainted with the wide range of Kothari's writings. More importantly, I developed an enormous respect for his ability to build institutions and lead large projects of collaborative research. He had already established himself as the pioneer of election studies in India, building a team at CSDS that included D.L. Sheth, Bashiruddin Ahmed and Ramashray Roy - all major analysts of electoral behaviour - and starting the first data bank in India on electoral surveys that would in time grow into the Lokniti data unit - the most important resource today for deciphering the mysterious doings of the Indian voter.

As part of this project, Kothari led a team of scholars who set out to study the phenomenon of caste in the evolving democratic politics of different states and regions. The volume he edited, *Caste in Indian Politics* (1973), still remains the most influential book ever published on the subject. In his introduction, Kothari argued that India's electoral democracy had extracted caste from its traditional ritual and religious moorings and turned it into a modern and malleable form of mobilizing social and economic demands. This became a foundational formulation for all subsequent studies of caste as a political phenomenon.

In the early 1970s, Rajni Kothari was known to be close to the ruling establishment in New Delhi. He was involved in the founding of the Indian Council of Social Science Research as the premier funding body for social science research. He was regularly consulted in matters of planning and development. By 1974, however, it became clear to him that the Congress system he had described so meticulously was being systematically destroyed by the centralizing thrust of Indira Gandhi's regime. A new group of Indira loyalists spouting fiery leftist rhetoric now began to attack Kothari for his allegedly bourgeois-liberal theories and American academic connections. I remember some of these virulent and sometimes abusive criticisms of Kothari that were published in the social science journals of the time. Despite my own pronounced Marxism, I found these diatribes shallow, irritating and, considering the deeply authoritarian strain that ran through much of their anti-imperialist and socialist verbiage, utterly insincere. Kothari's disenchantment with the Indira regime led him and many of his CSDS colleagues to embrace Jayaprakash Narayan's Navanirman movement, doubtless confirming every suspicion that his leftist critics held against him. CSDS came under a cloud and, in one of those arbitrary acts of petty retribution that characterized Emergency rule, its funding from the ICSSR was drastically slashed.

With the dramatic elections of 1977, however, the tables were turned. Kothari had had a hand in drafting the manifesto of the Janata Party. He now became a member of the Planning Commission and chairman of the ICSSR. Needless to say, in the academic world no less than in politics, the knives were out for those who were believed to have been close to the Emergency regime. But Kothari supervised the new dispensation at ICSSR in the most impartial and gracious manner imaginable. He even refused to restore the unfair cut in the ICSSR grant to CSDS, arguing that with him at the head of both bodies, the move would amount to an unacceptable conflict of interest. For those used to the goings-on in Indian cricket today, Kothari's position might seem like something out of a fairy tale. CSDS had to wait for the end of Kothari's term, and the coming of Sukhamoy Chakrabarty as the new chairman of ICSSR, before the anomaly could be rectified.

The 1980s marked a distinct turn in Kothari's thinking. He set up Lokayan as a platform for the coming together of a whole range of new social movements and virtually became their mentor. He now argued passionately for the broadening of democratic participation by launching radical movements outside the rigid control of party organizations. He was at the forefront of the civil liberties movement, being a founding member of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, and was one of the authors of the historic report, *Who Are the*

Guilty? that named the Congress politicians responsible for organizing the Delhi pogrom against Sikhs in 1984. It is during this phase of his life, from the late 1980s, that I met him a number of times and came to know something of the depth of his commitment to a life of the mind.

I discovered that Kothari had been born in 1928 in a wealthy Jain family of Gujarat. When, as a young man just out of college, he declared his intention to go to London for further studies, his uncle arranged for a visit to an astrologer who predicted that the young Rajni would never secure admission to a British university, and even if he did, would fail his exams. But Kothari defied the stars, secured a London degree, dissociated himself from the family business and, in 1953, took up the low-paid job of university lecturer in Baroda. Ten years later, he set up CSDS as a venue for creative and critical thinking. Perhaps as a protest against the domination of Indian social science by a pedestrian variety of economic technicians, he introduced the unwritten rule that CSDS would never employ an economist in its faculty.

Liberalism in India has a long history going back to the 19th century. But in its utilitarian, Gladstonian and Fabian phases, it always carried in both content and style the marks of its Western origin. It routinely repeated the doctrines of individual right and private property without seriously examining the conditions of their importation into a land with a completely different history of legal and political institutions, and quite slavishly imitated the formal practices of Westminster-style democracy or American capitalism, if necessary by keeping out of the hallways of power the unlettered and unwashed representatives of the native masses. Kothari had first-hand knowledge of both British and American liberalism. But he developed a liberal vocabulary and liberal practices that were of a sturdier vernacular make.

In his *Memoirs* (2002), he describes the intellectual circles of Baroda where he first encountered the rough and tumble of Indian political debate. It was characterized by a conversational style that could be combative, sometimes acerbic, but always patient, unhurried and generous. Every debate would be adjourned to the next day; no argument was ever finally clinched. Not for him the Powerpoint presentation with 15 slides in 15 minutes. His death, I feel, marks the end of an era in India's intellectual life.

The writer is honorary professor, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, and professor at Columbia University

INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETIES

PIONEER, JAN 28, 2015

PREMIER GANDHIAN INSTITUTION TO GET MODERN OUTLOOK SOON

In an effort to connect youth with Gandhian philosophy, Navjivan Trust – one of the premier institutions founded by Mahatma Gandhi in Ahmedabad is all set to add new features at its premise situated on Ashram Road.

Navjivan Trust, a publishing house established in 1929 by the Father of the Nation — Mahatma Gandhi with a view to explain the essence of Satyagraha to the people of India through two weeklies newspapers — Navjivan and Young India is now all set to offer an art gallery ‘Satya’, a state-of-the art cafeteria ‘Karma’ and a Centre for Sustainable Development on its premise.

“Visitors at the unique cafeteria and art gallery will have free-of-cost access of Gandhi literature and publications of more than 800 titles published by Navjivan Trust. Besides books of other noted writers across the globe will be kept here for visitors,” says Vivek Desai, Managing Trustee of Navjivan Trust.

The idea is to connect more and more people, especially youngsters with Gandhi and his thoughts, says Desai adding that there will be no fix charges at art gallery and cafeteria as the guests are suppose to pay their bills voluntarily after having tea and snacks as per their wish. According to him, the menu should be simple and hygienic, which Gandhiji himself recommended, even goat milk (Mahatma used to consume) will also be available here.

“On every Saturday and Sunday, the Café will offer ‘Gandhi Thali’. The art gallery will showcase photographs, writings and artwork of Mahatma Gandhi. Adjacent to the gallery an old printing press has been displayed, in which Navjivan and Young India used to print before freedom. Moreover, typewriters used by Mahadevbhai Desai, Gandhiji’s personal secretary and Satyagraha activist,” he added.

“We want lots of youngsters to visit the place and go through Gandhi literature and discuss Gandhi philosophy in current perspective over a cup of coffee or tea,” said Kapil Raval, one of the trustees of Navjivan trust

Apart from these two structural additions, the Gandhian publishing house will also start a mission “Navajivan Centre for Sustainable Development” (NCSD) as one of its functional bodies. The centre will play a key role in connecting Gandhian Philosophy to various developments taking place in the country.

The objective of NCSD is to work in direction of realisation of India which was dreamed by Gandhiji decades back using various projects, both independently and in association with the Government, said Samir Shukla, mission director, who is also an architect instrumental in designing art gallery and Café. “Through NCSD we aim to establish organisation as a professional consulting and implementation agency which will utilise technical knowledge in Gandhian way,” says Shukla.

The core of NCSD's objectives is to strengthen rural India by facilitation of basic needs and making state-of-the-art developments possible at grass-root level, he said adding that the centre is conceptualised in a way that it can work in association with Government shoulder to shoulder for various projects. The birth of NCSD will make sure that any worth idea does not limit itself to a mere thought and gets realised. Gujarat Chief Minister Anandiben Patel will inaugurate the gallery, Café and NCSD on Thursday.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TELEGRAPH, JAN 28, 2015

Advancing a vision- Obama's visit put growing Indo-US relations on a firm path Diplomacy: K.P. Nayar

By the time his three-day visit was drawing to a close, Barack Obama felt satisfied enough to claim ownership of it. He clearly got tired of reading and hearing that although it was he who had changed the flow of American history by shifting the date of his State of the Union address to travel to India, all the credit for this trip was going to Narendra Modi.

At President Pranab Mukherjee's State banquet, Obama asked several journalists individually, including this columnist, if they were satisfied with the way his visit was going. One of them ventured to suggest that it was he who launched India and the United States of America on its current phase of relations in 2010 in Mumbai. Michelle Obama, who was listening, was reminded of a scintillating speech she made at a school in Bethesda, less than a mile from where this columnist was then living.

It was that speech, very early on in the Democratic primaries for the 2008 presidential election, which unveiled the First Lady's public persona. The implication was that Obama's previous visit four years ago was similarly a milestone in Indo-US relations. Michelle Obama nodded in agreement.

For those who have followed Obama since his arrival on America's national stage at the Democratic presidential nominating convention in Boston in 2004, it has always been clear that he closely follows what is written or said about him in the media. All US presidents do, and even have focus groups to decide on policy based on public perception, although one of Obama's predecessors, George W. Bush, vehemently denied it.

On this visit Obama confirmed this when he referred to Indian media headlines about his visit to Mumbai in 2010. It would not have been surprising if the US president had grown a little tired of excessive media hype unilaterally giving credit to the prime minister for everything. It would only have been fair to at least share the credit equally between the visitor and his functional host - who was Modi - in the public discourse in this country in the run up to and during the visit.

So, when Obama got up to speak at the Indo-US business summit on Monday evening, he finally took ownership of what is undoubtedly a new climate in the relations between India and America. "I was proud to speak to the US-India Business Council in Mumbai on my last visit to India," he began. Now "we are advancing the vision that I laid out on my last visit - India and the United States as true global partners".

Obama came to India four years ago as his country was emerging from the biggest economic slide since the Great Depression. He came to create jobs for his people and to improve their lives by engaging an emerging economy, such as India, which held

promise. And that clearly has not changed. It remains Obama's priority notwithstanding what pundits in this country may argue, citing strategic issues and the military pivot that are on the table.

"A core element of this vision is greater trade, investment and economic partnership," Obama continued, stressing his 2010 visit as the starting point. "When I spoke to you on my last visit, I pledged to broaden and deepen our economic ties - and that's what we have done."

The US president reminded everyone that "we have increased trade between our countries by some 60 per cent... which is a record high. And this is a win-win. It's a win for America and our workers because US exports to India are up nearly 35 per cent and those exports support about 170,000 well-paying American jobs."

It did not matter to Obama that some Indian conglomerates choose to invest abroad rather than in India. "At the same time, Indian investment in our country is growing," the US president observed with obvious satisfaction. "And those Indian investments are supporting jobs across America. We have got high-tech jobs in upstate New York, manufacturing jobs in North Carolina, engineering jobs in places like Michigan and Ohio" because Indian companies are putting their money into ventures in the US.

Obama assumed ownership of his visit only after substantial progress had been achieved in engaging India in the first two days of his stay in New Delhi. Such progress made it possible for the US president to live down the perception back home that he was leaving stateside to see the Taj Mahal and view some sort of parade at a time when his presence was only needed at home, indeed, mandatory by convention because of the State of the Union address and the subsequent visits to the US heartland with the Union's message.

The progress on Sunday and Monday that persuaded Obama to own up to the India initiative as his creation was not, however, confined to the nuclear deal or defence cooperation between New Delhi and Washington. Indeed, at the business summit, American companies were withholding judgment on the so-called breakthrough in pushing the Indo-US nuclear deal. Of course, the nuclear industry in the US does not expect Modi and Obama at their level to get into the fine print of the agreement that broke the deadlock which has bedevilled the nuclear deal for seven years.

But the US is a legalistic society in the extreme, much more than India's other nuclear suppliers. So any actual progress on implementing the nuclear deal is contingent on the full details of the Modi-Obama breakthrough being fleshed out and then being vetted by the battery of lawyers for Westinghouse and GE Hitachi, the two companies in the US which have been allotted sites for future nuclear power plants in this country.

On defence too, the two countries will have to take long strides before the defence relationship, for India, can become anywhere nearly as comfortable as the one with the Russians or as transactional as the ones with the Israelis. The renewal of a defence framework agreement was routine and expected. But the much-awaited Defence Trade

and Technology Initiative will only be preliminary in the nature of its operation and will have to blossom in order to be meaningful. The defence projects identified for co-production will only be pilot projects. Their results will have to be weighed before they go full steam.

But there were other areas, significantly more transformational for India, where progress was achieved during Obama's visit. The best examples are three memorandums of understanding signed on the day Obama arrived: the MoUs were between the governments of Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan on the one hand, and the US Trade and Development Agency on the other, for developing Vishakhapatnam, Allahabad, and Ajmer as "smart cities".

The MoUs envisage the participation of American industry with experience in this sector, in transforming the three towns into smart cities. Unlike the nuclear deal or the defence co-production effort, this is an initiative where the *aam aadmi*, the ordinary people, will feel the difference from this country's association with America.

In the public discourse on Obama's visit, although less so within the two governments, the elephant in the room has been China. That this is pointless and counter-productive became obvious when Obama himself waded into the issue. "We do about \$100 billion a year in trade with India, which is a great improvement since I took office," Obama said. "But we do about \$560 billion a year with China."

That is the reality of US-China relations for those Indians who constantly bait Beijing. Without that \$560 billion trade there would be a precipitate decline in the standards and quality of life of the American people.

That said, Obama's visit has been, as yet, the most comprehensive articulation of the ambitious nature of Indo-US engagement. But it will remain a mere articulation without constant follow up. Yet there is no doubt that Modi's decision to invite Obama for the Republic Day celebrations has put India back on America's policy radar. That is no mean achievement in the second half of the final term in office of a US president.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 27, 2015

Barack Obama announces \$4 billion government-backed investments & lending to India

At a CEO summit hosted by PM Modi in New Delhi, Obama said that US Export-Import Bank would finance \$1 billion in exports of 'Made-in-America' products.

NEW DELHI: US President [Barack Obama](#) on Monday announced \$4 billion in government-backed investments and lending to India, as he sought to scale up a trade relationship he said was "defined by so much untapped potential".

At a CEO summit hosted by [Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) in New Delhi, Obama said that US Export-Import Bank would finance \$1 billion in exports of 'Made-in-America' products. The [Overseas Private Investment Corporation](#) will lend \$1 billion to small- and medium-sized enterprises in underserved rural areas of India.

Another \$2 billion will be committed by the US Trade and Development Agency for renewable energy, Obama said in a speech.

Obama said there were still too many barriers to doing business in India as he hailed moves by PM Narendra Modi to cut red tape.

"There are still too many barriers, hoops to jump through," Obama said in an address to a group of US and Indian CEOs in New Delhi.

"We hear this consistently from business leaders such as you," Obama added, speaking alongside Modi.

Obama emphasised the importance of Indo-US relations, saying, "Even as this visit is rich with symbolism, it is also rich with substance. India and US can grow and prosper together."

"US exports to India are substantial; Indian investments in US are growing as well. Our growing trade relations are also a win for India. Both Indian and US workers are benefitting from the ties," Obama said.

Stating that there is a lot of 'untapped trade potential', Obama said, "PM Modi agrees that there is a lot of scope to improve the trade relations. We have to focus on making doing business easier in both our countries."

"We can work together to develop technologies that will help India move forward. US is ready to help in broadband connectivity; build better roads. We need to make sure that economic growth in both India and US is inclusive," Obama added.

JUDICIARY

TRIBUNE, JAN 27, 2015

New mode of judges' selection

Justice Kamaljit Singh Garewal (retd)

Uncertainty persists on the procedure the NJAC may follow

Soon the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) will start selecting Supreme Court and High Court judges. It is everyone's fond hope that this will be done in a more open and balanced manner. The commission will be chaired by the Chief Justice of India and will have as its members two senior-most Supreme Court judges, the Minister of Law & Justice and two eminent persons. What has really been created is an expanded collegium, though not quite a public service commission for selecting judges.

The manner of selection of judges of the subordinate judiciary and members of the all-India services is altogether different. No collegiums are at work here, it is a pure and simple competitive selection. Quite similar to the selection of IAS/IFS/IPS/Central Services officers by the UPSC and PCS/PPS/Allied Services officers by state public service commissions.

There is still uncertainty regarding the selection procedure which the NJAC may follow. So far there is nothing to indicate whether candidates would be invited to apply, write an examination and be interviewed. Therefore, what we are going to get is selection by a modified or extended collegium dominated by the judiciary but it may not be based on a competitive selection process. So why is there still criticism that the NJAC will impinge on judicial independence.

Independence of the judiciary is a misunderstood concept. Judges do not need independence to take the right decision without "fear or favour", "affection or ill will". What these terms in the judge's oath mean is that judges shall be fearless, fair without favouring any one party, shall not decide on the basis of affection towards a party or his lawyer and display goodwill towards all. These are constitutional duties of a judge and are much more important than judicial independence. In the context of judging, independence of the judiciary gets covered if judges stick to their oath. More than fearlessness, fairness, goodwill towards all, what judges do need is learning, intellect, ethics and courage to do justice. One would expect that these are the qualities that the NJAC would be looking for when deciding on the merits of candidates. This would be a practical approach for selecting judges, and has nothing to do with

independence of the judiciary. Then why is independence of the judiciary dominating the debate on judicial selection process to the extent that the other great qualities of judges have a tendency to be side-lined? In the ultimate analysis judging is about taking a decision based on law. The judgment should be legal, based on facts, and reached in a fair and impartial manner.

Independence of the judiciary should not confound us. Every judge is expected to be independent. He decides cases in accordance with law, as applied to the facts of the case presented before him. He is not concerned with the opinion of his superiors, unless these opinions are judicial precedents. But he is not at all concerned with what the political masters want. Occasionally, some judges decide on a whim, a hunch or on some pre-conceived notion like all capitalists (or socialists) must be taught a lesson or all rapists must be hanged. This tendency should be curbed but such independence of judgment is not judicial independence at all.

All judges are expected to be honest, hard working, abreast with the law, fair, impartial, compassionate, quick in disposal of cases, clear in writing their judgments. In addition they are also expected to be independent.

Judges select district and civil judges. They look for qualities which will make the candidate a good judge. Then depending upon the vacancies, the best candidates are selected. After the selection the candidate develops his skills, the power of judicial reasoning, and gets trained in judging at the Judicial Academy. The selection procedure has nothing to do with independence of the judiciary unless it means that judges are independent in ignoring the procedure while making their choice.

The present collegium system of selection is decidedly opaque. Candidates can be selected, and some unfairly rejected, without any objective assessment of merit. On the other hand the selection of civil servants, based on a written examination, assessment of qualifications and a formal interview, is a merit-based selection. It won't help if we get embroiled in the doctrine of independence of the judiciary while debating the selection of judges. Only judicial functions require independence, selection of judges requires independence of a different kind, like the independence enjoyed by the Union Public Service Commission. The NJAC in the present form will be able to select capable superior court judges from the Bar, the judicial service and academia, independently, fairly and impartially but undeterred by the judicial independence

doctrine. If the selection panel has a few non-judicial members, it will enhance its reach, scope and respectability, in the eyes of the citizens. Two eminent, respectable, honest persons should not be difficult to find. One could have former Presidents or Prime Ministers as eminent persons or eminent lawyers/ parliamentarians/law professors. The NJAC will have enough inputs about the candidates before it and will definitely give us good judges.

Let us not scuttle the NJAC before it has even taken off.

The writer is a former Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh

LIBRARIES

BUSINESS STANDARD, JAN 27, 2015

T C A Srinivasa-Raghavan: Libraries, not 'festivals' and awards

It is hard to believe that anything connected with books can be vulgar. But from all accounts literary "festivals" are apparently getting to be just that - you know, what the Americans call razzmatazz

Literary festivals are not the only vulgar spots on the literary tie. All those absurd awards are there, too, putting knobs on the vulgarity ... By the way, if you examine the lists, many of the awardees become deserving only after they have been rewarded with an award

It is hard to believe that anything connected with books can be vulgar. But from all accounts literary "festivals" are apparently getting to be just that - you know, what the Americans call razzmatazz.

The just concluded one in Jaipur, says a friend who attended it, is leading the way by a long mile. I asked her why. She said the festival seemed to be more about the writers and less about their books.

She has a point. Ask yourself: do you want to listen to a writer or do you want to read him (or her, for that matter)?

After all, until these "festivals" came along, who gave a fig what an author had to say as opposed to what he had to write? Indeed does a writer become a better writer because he talks a lot about things, especially things of which he is ignorant or about which he is bigoted?

But literary festivals are not the only vulgar spots on the literary tie. All those absurd awards are there, too, putting knobs on the vulgarity. You know, Nobel, Booker, Pulitzer and so on until you get close to infinity. You can see almost the full list here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_literary_awards. Even Wiki gave up trying to list them all.

But what do these stupid awards actually prove? That A is better than B? If so, why? What was wrong with B, C, D and so on till Z? Who says so anyway?

Will Tilly Bagshawe, who entertains so enormously, ever get one? Perish the thought. Not a chance.

Also, since the awards are based on juries, some form of voting must be used by them. However, as we all know, all voting systems are inherently flawed.

This has been proved over and over again. But such is the hype that everyone has chosen to disregard the fact that individual preferences can never be ordered sensibly.

So while it is one thing to say "I like this book", it is quite another to say "I like this book so much that I will approve the award of very large sums of money to the author".

Which reminds me of what the late [R K Narayan](#) wrote back in 1973 in the Illustrated Weekly, namely, the worst exhibition of poor taste is by those who stand on judgement on others' creativity.

By the way, if you examine the lists, many of the awardees become deserving only after they have been rewarded with an award.

Support libraries, please

Okay, enough of the rant. If not in awards, where should the sponsors of these awards put their money?

One option, as shown by Rohan Murty, is to support a particular genre of books. The Murty Classical Library of India is a superb example of doing the right thing. Only problem: he has endowed it at Harvard. But this is a limited option.

But it leads to the inevitably Indian question: why Harvard, da? Why not some Indian location, like Hubli or Howrah or Hoshangabad?

And that, in turn, leads to the real answer to what sponsors should do with their money. Instead of paying for large prizes to often undeserving authors, in my weighty opinion they should support libraries.

Indian [libraries](#) are, in the final analysis, really something to be deeply ashamed of. For example, the basement of the wonder Ratan Tata Library at the Delhi School of Economics was flooded knee-deep for several years.

It was only the single-minded persistence of the then director, Badal Mukherji, that the water was pumped out. Old books and manuscripts were lying in the slush like dead frogs.

The Delhi University Library, built to look like the library in Cambridge, used to be a great repository. Today, it is a shadow of its former self.

If you go to the Connemara Public Library in Chennai, you will hang your head in shame at the poor storage. Some very rare books and documents are contained therein. Many are rotting away.

I have not been to the National Library in Kolkata for a long time. But in the mid-1990s it, too, was in a state of sad disrepair. I hope it is better now. It is a huge repository of all things good.

There are scores of such examples littered across India; sad, neglected, depressing examples of what asses we are because we copy the wrong things from the West.

It doesn't cost much to run good libraries and the bang per buck of investment in a reading-room-cum-library is enormous. All money bags should bear this in mind the next time they pay for "festivals" and awards

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 27, 2015

Library in pocket: eBook boost for regional literature

BACK TO BOOKS Owners of applications offering digital books in Indian languages claim eBooks future of reading

The story of regional language publishing is fast taking an interesting digital turn in India.

A plethora of online platforms that publish, distribute and sell eBooks in local languages have come up in the past couple of years. Such digital platforms include book reading applications, e-bookstores and cloudbased libraries offering books in Indian languages such as Hindi, Gujarati, Malayalam and Bengali.

Many of these new digital ventures have been started by IT professionals who harbour a passion for regional literature. Ahmedabad-based Apurva Asher is one such professional, who launched e-Shabda last year with the aim of bringing regional literature on to the online platform.

Asher, an avid book lover, said the idea of launching e-Shabda came to him after he figured that all the classics in the US and Europe were available in the digital format.

However, much to his disappointment, Asher found that most of the popular Indian classics - penned in Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Telugu, Marathi, Kannada and Oriya - were not available in the eBook format.

“A part of the reason is that until recently, the Indian publishers did not have access to technology to create a standard eBook in a regional language. Also, different platforms have their own digital rights management techniques and rules, and there was no single platform that allowed authors or publishers to sell or distribute electronic books. These were some of the issues we wanted to resolve through eShabda,” said Ashar.

He added that what made the task of creating eBooks — with flowable text — quite challenging was the fact that many of the regional fonts were not supported by e-readers and mobile devices.

“We use the standard Unicode fonts to ensure universal readability of the books that we create,” said Ashar, whose company has created 700 books in the standard Unicode Gujarati fonts. eShabda at present is adding 50 titles every week; the huge Indian diaspora being one of its target customers. He now wishes to create multimedia books that have both text and audio.

If eShabda is creating eBooks in Gujarati, Kolkata-based SwiftBoox is creating and distributing digital books in Bengali.

Santanu Chowdhury, the founder of SwiftBoox said that a lot of his business came from tier two cities. “As of now we are working with top Bengali publishers. We converting and distributing eBooks through various digital platforms, including our own. One of the ways of promoting eBooks is the bundle concept, wherein traditional publishers offer eBooks with the print ones. Besides, eBook stores should also create subscription models,” Chowdhury said.

Rockstand, the eMagazine and eBook application currently offers about 20,000 books in 13 regional languages.

“The total transactions of regional eBooks and eMagazines make 17% of Rockstand’s total retails. In fact, there’s a 100 percent growth every quarter in sales of regional language eBooks, with eBooks for children being the most popular category,” said Delhi-based Praveen Rajpal, who founded Rockstand in 2013.

One of the first migrants to the eBooks space was Kerala-based publishing house DC Books - its eBook store called Wink Store offers over 3,000 eBooks in regional languages, a lot of them in Malayalam. DC Books today has its own Android and iPhone applications with its full-fledged technology wing majorly concerting on eBooks these days. “There is a healthy 20% growth in the sales of eBooks in Malayalam since we launched the digital book store in 2010. The eBooks have helped propel Malayalam literature to a global market.” said Sumitha Athidhi, a manger at DC books.

Many other publishers — such as New Horizon Media — too have their own eBook application for Android and iPhone. Bangalore based Newshunt, is also building its eBooks catalogue in all Indian languages.

Then there is PubSub, a Bangalore-based digital magazine and book store, which works on a subscription model and shares its revenue with publishers. Launched in August 2014, it offers a large selection of books in several Indian languages.

The best part is most of these digital stores offer books at prices that is at least 30 per cent less than the price of a paperback. While eShabda rents out books for ` 20 for a week, PubSub offers subscription — for ` 300 a month — in which readers can read as many books offered by the service as they wanted.

Even big e-retailers like Flipkart, which launched its multiple reader application in July 2013, believed that the potential of the eBook market was great.

“Our eBooks category today is growing at a faster rate than our physical books category. The category of regional books is likely to see a two-fold growth in the coming years. We will be adding a new bunch of titles this year in this category,” said Ankit Nagori, SVP, marketplace, Flipkart.

Nagori may not have been exaggerating. According to industry estimates, eBooks could contribute up to 25% of the total book sales in India.

eShabda founder Ashar believed that the new emerging digital platform will give a fresh boost to regional language literature and bring in transparency as far as sales of eBooks were concerned.

“The moment a book is downloaded from our website, an email message goes to the writer. The new digital platform will also lead to the emergence of a whole new generation of writers. There will be lot of junk literature in the beginning, but things will stabilise in a year and a lot of talent will flourish in online medium,” he said.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

INDIAN EXPRESS, JAN 29, 2015

High Court orders corporations to implement 2001 cleanliness plan

[Anesha Mathur](#)

Taking note of a 2001 order issued by the then Commissioner of the Municipal corporation of Delhi to monitor sanitation workers and create a “comprehensive plan” to clean Delhi, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday pulled up the three corporations for the lack of cleanliness and sanitation.

NGO Nyayabhoomi had submitted a copy of the circular on sanitation issued by the MCD before its trifurcation. The deputy commissioners of the three corporations, who were present in the court, however, claimed that they were unaware of the circular as it had been issued before the trifurcation. The court has now directed the corporations to implement the plans.

“How will we make Delhi a world-class city? It is not even an Asia-class city. Despite all the norms and the safai karamcharis available, we find garbage strewn on nearly all roads of Delhi. Drains are not being cleaned properly,” the bench of Justice B D Ahmed and Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva said.

The deputy commissioners, who had appeared in court to apprise it of the steps taken so far, said the number of safai karamcharis in the city were “not enough”. According to the affidavit submitted by the corporations, there are 62,000 sanitation workers in the city.

“For this purpose, the petitioner has suggested the implementation of an order issued by then MCD Commissioner on February 13, 2001. We find it comprehensive. But to our dismay, the counsel for the MCD and the deputy commissioners were unaware of the circular. They submitted that the circular was issued prior to the trifurcation of the MCD and it is not known whether it has been adopted,” the bench noted.

“We direct it be adopted forthwith and appropriate circular be issued by each corporation within a fortnight. The said circulars be implemented without fail so that sanitation work is monitored effectively and there are noticeable results on streets/roads of Delhi,” the court said.

The civic bodies have been directed to file status reports on the implementation of the 2001 plan and the court has issued notice to the Centre, the Public Works Department, the Delhi Jal Board, the Cantonment board and New Delhi Municipal Council to file their responses by the next hearing.

On the issue of creating more landfills in Delhi, MCD counsel Ajay Arora told the court that the civic agencies had identified 31 sites but had not received the land from the Delhi Development Authority. The court has, for now, directed the DDA to file an affidavit on the steps taken to making land available to the corporations.

ORGANIZATIONS

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JAN 28, 2015

Changing paradigms of HR

Intuit is a software company, with its principals based in the US. The company suddenly jumped the ladder in the Fortune 500 list from down below to the top ten. When a television anchor asked its CEO what special work had he done for the company, the reply was amazing. "I do not work for the company. I work for thousands of my employees, who in turn work for the company". A public sector CEO with such a mindset could turn the organisational culture.

Human resource management (HRM) occupies the centre stage in enterprises today. Employee loyalty is now more aligned to one's career and skill development than to the organisation. Therefore, HRM today aims at developing people and their potential for growth. Skill and the potential of individuals are interlinked and aligned to the organisational goals.

The concept and practice of employee-employer relation has undergone a sea change in the last one decade. Redistribution of power, greater participation of employees, vertical and horizontal information sharing and team work have replaced the traditional traits of industrial relations, and consequently transforming the Personnel and Industrial Relations department.

The traditional functions of the personal department to attract, recruit, train, assess, promote and decide compensation have transformed into managing change, talent development, brand promotion and containing attrition. HRM has become an integral part of an organisation's vision and strategy. It has gradually added business sustainability planning, work diversity, mergers & acquisitions and sustainable community relations to its broad functions.

HRM has come to realise that the global presence and acceptance of a company depend much on its organisational culture and how trustworthy it is towards the community at large. Trust being highly perishable depends on consistent behaviour.

HRM today must take into consideration that (i) employees are largely in the age group of 25-35, (ii) they have more loyalty to profession than organisation, (iii) they are educated and skilled, (iv) there is high level of mobility and attrition, and (v) they want the best of welfare and packages. In case HR policy makers are reluctant to adapt to the change, they will have to perish gradually. Change has come to stay, therefore, change yourself or the system will change you.

Managing the change

With the advent of globalisation, the corporate sector has been subjected to radical changes in its policy, structure and management practices.

The emergence of the knowledge economy has given primacy to knowledge workers. In order to manage such paradigm changes, organisations need to become more flexible, dynamic and agile to accommodate innovations.

It is a general tendency to be complacent, especially when you have been a successful organisation by implementing age-old policies. But it must be noted that past success is not a guarantee for the future. Focused change management is sine qua non for success. A glance at successful organisations indicates that organisations which have been open to adapt to changes have survived. HR professionals act as real change agents in their organisation and are responsible for shaping the attitude of the human resource to focus on the business objective.

Leadership development

Best leaders are those who develop leadership qualities in their subordinates. There is a marked difference between leader and leadership. While the former is individualistic in nature where success depends upon the attitude, aptitude, socialising and network of the leader, leadership is system-oriented and process-driven, reflecting a complex structure of communication—both vertically and horizontally, with different layers of inter- and intra-teams. We may have the best leaders but the worst leadership. The emphasis has to be on leadership, and the leader has to be role model.

Succession planning is yet another important area that remains neglected in PSUs. Board level appointments take a long time, resulting in ad hoc arrangements to run enterprises. Even within enterprises there is no set standard for succession planning to groom potential managers who could reach the top positions. An integrated cadre of potential professions must be drawn for PSUs to minimise the selection period, and inter- and intra-placement of candidates could change the culture of corporate PSUs.

Board & culture

HR is the front end of any enterprise. Promoting the enterprise as a brand is a function in the hands of HR functionaries. A perfect harmonised relation between all layers, based on ethics, transparency, friendliness and best community relations, shall reflect on the organisational culture. HR policy must be innovative enough to provide the extra mile so that the enterprise attracts the best talents and retains them.

HR must understand that the nature of employment is gradually moving towards contractual, task-based and time-frame-driven. It has become imperative for HR professionals to understand the writing on the wall, the shifting demographics, and aspiration levels, as HRM is no longer just for record-keeping, administrating, recruiting and housekeeping.

By UD Choubey

POPULATION

ASIAN AGE, JAN 29, 2015

Qualified couples asked in China to have second child

Facing a sharp decline in work force, Shanghai authorities have appealed to “qualified young couples” to have second child as 30 per cent population of China’s biggest business hub will be aged 60 or above by this year’s end, official media reported on Wednesday.

As the world’s most populous nation struggles to grapple with the surging numbers of the old, the demographic crisis were more pronounced in Shanghai, China’s biggest city with over 21 million people struggling to find work force.

In a rare public call, an official at Shanghai’s Population and Family Planning Commission which oversees the city’s birth control, appealed for “qualified young couples” to have two children.

The comment came on Sunday during a consultation as part of the annual meeting of the Shanghai people’s congress, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

The official was quoted as saying the benefits of having a second child including family stability and social development.

Shanghai is one of the first big Chinese cities to face this population dilemma. By the end of this year, nearly 30 per cent of the population, or 4.35 million people, will be aged 60 or above, as per the figures from the municipal government. This will pose a serious challenge to China’s one of the most economically dynamic cities.

China lifted its decades-long one-child policy in 2013 under which couples can apply for permission to have a second child if one of the parents is an only child. Yet the impact of the change in policy has not been as great as expected.

Commission figures showed 90 per cent of local women of reproductive age were eligible, but less than five per cent of them had applied, the paper quoted Fan Hua, director of the commission’s family development bureau as saying.

Mr Fan said the rising cost of bringing up children and the desires of many women to develop their careers were behind the lack of interest in having a second child.

While the option of having a second child appears less popular than expected, migrants from the country’s rural areas, the main workforces continue to face strict migration controls.

The household registration system, or hukou system, leaves migrants unable to enjoy the best social benefits like local residents. According to last year’s official report, China had

about 185 million people above the age of 60, or 13.7 per cent of the population. The figure is expected to surge to 221 million in 2015.

HINDU, JAN 27, 2015

National Register of Citizens to be announced in Jan. 2016: Gogoi

SUSHANTA TALUKDAR

Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi on Monday announced that the National Register of Citizens (NRC), currently being updated in Assam, would be published in January 2016.

Making the announcement in his Republic Day address delivered after the ceremonial hoisting of the National Flag at Khanapara here, the Chief Minister said that the procedure devised for updating the citizens' register envisaged the use of latest information technology and aimed at ensuring that no names of foreign nationals find mention in the NRC.

Stating that illegal migration has been a matter of serious concern, Mr Gogoi said his government was committed to preventing illegal migration into Assam from the international border, and in order to bring permanent solution to the issue, the Assam Government had started updating the NRC under the guidance of the Central government.

The Chief Minister said that his government had also taken steps for detection and deportation of illegal foreigners by strengthening the Foreigners' Tribunals and by the establishing three temporary detention centres at Goalpara, Kokrajhar and Silchar to accommodate those declared as "foreigners" by the tribunals, till their expulsion.

Dwelling on the insurgency problem, the Chief Minister said that the Security forces currently engaged in massive operations against the militants of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (Songbijit), who massacred innocent Adivasis on December 23, gained major success with the support of the people and the government shall continue to use all its resources to deal firmly with subversive elements. "The strategy adopted by our government for the last 14 years under the Unified Command Structure has given significant results with many misguided youth joining the mainstream. The success has also been reflected in the Suspension of Operations with 17 extremist outfits, out of which the Government signed an MoS (Memorandum of Settlement) with BLT (Bodo Liberation Tigers), UPDS (United People's Democratic Solidarity), DHD(N) (Dima Haram Daogah-Nunisa) and DHD (Jewel)," he said in his speech and added that his government would continue to make efforts to make all misguided youth who have embarked on militancy, to lay down arms and return to civil society within the parameters of the Constitution.

- Govt. to prevent illegal migration into Assam from international border
- To ensure names of foreign nationals don't find mention in NRC

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

BUSINESS LINE, JAN 28, 2015

Dealing with PDS reform

The Shanta Kumar panel's recommendations are broadly in the right direction

The Shanta Kumar panel to rationalise the National Food Security Act, 2013, has made some sensible suggestions. The law, by placing a huge burden on the exchequer for illusory public gain, requires a sense of balance. The subsidy involved in providing 5 kg of cereals (wheat, rice, coarse grain) per capita per month to 67 per cent of the population at Rs. 3/2/1, is conservatively estimated at Rs. 1.3 lakh crore. The real problem with the outgo is that it does not help food producers or consumers. National Sample Survey findings tell us that only 6 per cent of farmers, essentially big landlords, sell wheat or paddy to a procurement agency, while the rest are forced to sell below the support price to recover costs as quickly as possible. If most producers are outside the ambit of the procurement network, consumers too rely on the market for more than half their grain needs. NSSO figures say the average Indian requires close to 11 kg per capita of foodgrain a month, more than what the food law sets out to provide. The suggested changes involve providing a larger quantity of grain to fewer people. The food law entails an annual procurement of 61 million tonnes, close to half of which will not find its way to the poor, with leakages at 47 per cent. High procurement without liquidation of stocks has led to inflation, while fair price outlets remain under-stocked. This is clearly an absurd situation.

Even as the proposed moves are broadly in the right direction, they could run into resistance from States. The panel has suggested that subsidised grain (7 kg per person per month for 40 per cent, and not 67 per cent of the population) be given at 50 per cent of the MSP, and not Rs. 3 or less. If States such as Tamil Nadu want to continue with their universal PDS, they will have to take a hit of about Rs. 5 per kg just on BPL rice — the difference between the proposed issue price of Rs. 10 a kg and the BPL price of Rs. 5 a kg. Besides, they will end up buying more grain at above-poverty-line rates as the proportion of BPL foodgrain available to States will fall. While the proposed steps will enhance grain availability in the market and reduce the incentive for diversion, the cases of Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh, where universal PDS has been successful, deserve a specific response. Other States too may want to tailor the scheme to suit regional needs.

The committee has rightly suggested that the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar network be used to transfer subsidy to beneficiaries. Reforms in pricing, targeting and delivery of grain will lead to an annual saving of Rs.30,000 crore, which should be used for rural infrastructure. Moving to direct transfer is to be welcomed, as there seems no other option to plug leakages and check corruption in the distribution of subsidies.

RAILWAYS

ASIAN AGE, JAN 29, 2015

Railways plan a 'Go-India' travel card, branded trains

MANISH ANAND |

Replicating the Metro Card model, the Railways now have a “Go-India Card Scheme” allowing passengers to pay for tickets and make transactions cashless. The scheme has been started on New Delhi-Mumbai and New Delhi-Howrah routes now, and passengers can book tickets, retiring rooms and cloakrooms.

In an order to all general managers, the Railway Board said the “Go-India Card” would be a multi-purpose card for unreserved ticketing system, passenger reservation system at stations and automatic ticket vending machines. “Initially, the card can be issued with payment of Rs 70, with passengers getting a balance of Rs 20, and recharged in multiples of Rs 50, upto Rs 5,000. The maximum limit will be Rs 10,000,” the January 22 circular stated.

It cannot be used for e-tickets on IRCTC as it comes with a readable chip that won't work in online transactions at present. It also cannot be used for concessional tickets and vouchers.

The Railways, taking a cue from the IPL and Formula One racing, also plans the branding of premium trains to earn extra revenue. It is in advanced talks with top companies to brand popular trains like Rajdhani, Shatabdi, etc. Trains could be named after multinational giants for, say, 10 years at a time, Railway Board sources said.

RELIGION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 30, 2015

Bengal reconversions going on for years: VHP leaders Ravik Bhattacharya

At least 150 tribals were converted to Hinduism at Khoramdanga village in Bengal's Birbhum district on Wednesday. (Surajit Ghosh Hazra/ HT Photo)

Voluntary religious 'reconversion' has been going on in West Bengal for years to counter conversions of Hindus, Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders told HT on Thursday, a day after a controversy over its conversion of 150 Christian tribals to Hinduism.

VHP leaders said they would go to court if the Trinamool Congress-led state government accused them of forcibly converting people. "Various organisations, including ours, have been helping people who voluntarily want to reconvert. This has been happening for the past 30 years and thousands have been reconverted," said VHP representative Sachindranath Sinha. "Why this argument now if someone wants to reconvert voluntarily?"

The controversy comes at a time when hardline Hindu groups have conducted a series of ceremonies over the past six months to convert minorities to Hinduism, terming it 'ghar wapsi', or homecoming.

TMC spokesperson Derek O'Brien tweeted that CM Mamata Banerjee was personally monitoring the inquiry into the incident in Birbhum and tough measures would be taken if coercion was used in the conversions. Organisations like the VHP and RSS say Muslims and Christians have been forcing Hindus to convert for centuries. "We are not against any political party. But if there is an inquiry in the Birbhum issue, one should have an overall examination of all conversions in the state," said RSS spokesperson Jishnu Basu. "If there is a witch-hunt, people will think that it is to serve political means." BJP leaders remained silent on the issue as sources said party members were wary of creating controversy with local elections in the state this year and assembly polls next year.

TAXATION

BUSINESS STANDARD, JAN 28, 2015

Modi govt cuts wings of tax officials

Top management of firms to only be summoned for a few specified reasons and after written justification at a senior level, orders CBEC

The central government told [tax](#) officials last week that none of the senior management of large companies — chief executives, head of finance, general managers and so forth — should be summoned for evidence or to enforce recoveries.

In a circular issued on January 20, the Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC) has said the top management needs to be summoned only when there are indications of their involvement in a decision making process which might have led to revenue loss for the government.

“The instruction is welcome and reinforces the mindset of the new government to put a taxpayer-friendly tax administration in place. Though the instruction does not refer to customs matters, the taxpayer community can hope that the customs authorities would also respect the protocol set by their governing Board,” stated corporate law firm BMR Legal.

The instruction notes that summons are routinely issued by field formations under Section 14 of the Central Excise Act, 1944, to senior officials of companies, to call for evidence, documents or to enforce recoveries. It has said these should be a final resort.

[CBEC](#) has said a summons should be issued only by officers of the rank of superintendent, and only after prior written permission of an officer not below the rank of an assistant commissioner, with reasons to be recorded. Where prior written permission is not possible, oral or telephonic permission needs to be obtained and the officer intimated at the earliest.

The previous government of [Manmohan Singh](#) had been criticised by both Indian and foreign companies for a regime of tax notices, which led to many companies postponing their investment plans.

“The government is moving in the right direction. The extension of provisions of imprisonment to the service tax laws created lot of uneasiness in the industry at large.

This progressive circular comes as a major relief,” said Sumit Lunker, partner, indirect tax, BDO India LLP.

Adding: “India’s ranking in the World Bank’s ‘Doing Business’ report is far below the (five-country) BRICS counterparts. Such measures will help boost confidence and build trust between authorities and tax payers. A similar circular was issued in 1989 but it has been 25 years and it is very important that the ground authorities follow some house rules framed by CBEC. It is also imperative that state VAT (value added tax) authorities align with the mindset and intent of the Union government, making India a preferred place for doing business.”

Late last year, the high court here had struck down tax department cases against multinationals Vodafone and Shell in separate cases; the department had imposed taxes on their investments in Indian arms.

In its election manifesto, the Bharatiya Janata Party which is now in power at the Centre had promised to curb 'tax terrorism' and promised to make it easy to do business.

BMR Legal says at a policy level, the norm that the power to issue a summons needs to be exercised with discretion has existed for a long time. Even the circular issued in 1989 clearly provided that it should be a last resort, when the assesseees do not cooperate during investigation.

TAX TREMORS

Leighton India Contractors: Tax authorities slapped a notice on the company for subscribing to the shares of its Indian arm; it was a Rs 900-crore transfer-pricing dispute

IBM: The US technology major was asked to pay Rs 5,753 crore as income for under-reporting revenue for 2008-09

Nokia: Received a Rs 13,000-crore tax demand for transfer-pricing violations. The company has since moved court and shut its Chennai unit

Cairn India: Cairn Energy transferred shares of Jersey-based Cairn India Holding to Cairn India in 2006. The share transfer in India was valued at about Rs 26,000 crore. Authorities claimed this led to capital gains for Cairn UK Holdings taxable in India. The matter is still under consideration

Vodafone: Tax dept says Vodafone liable to pay tax on the sale of shares by Hutch to Vodafone in 2007. SC rejects tax department's tax demand notice. [UPA](#) govt comes out with an ordinance to tax the transaction. The matter is unresolved

Hindalco: I-T dept asks Hindalco to pay tax on guarantees given to overseas subsidiaries' loan facilities for the acquisition of Novelis

Shell: Shell asked to pay tax on equity investment in its Indian subsidiary. Bombay HC rules in favour of Shell

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

HINDU, JAN 25, 2015

India, U.S. sign three MoUs on smart cities

The U.S. has agreed to partner with Indian in developing three smart cities in Allahabad, Ajmer, and Visakhapatnam.

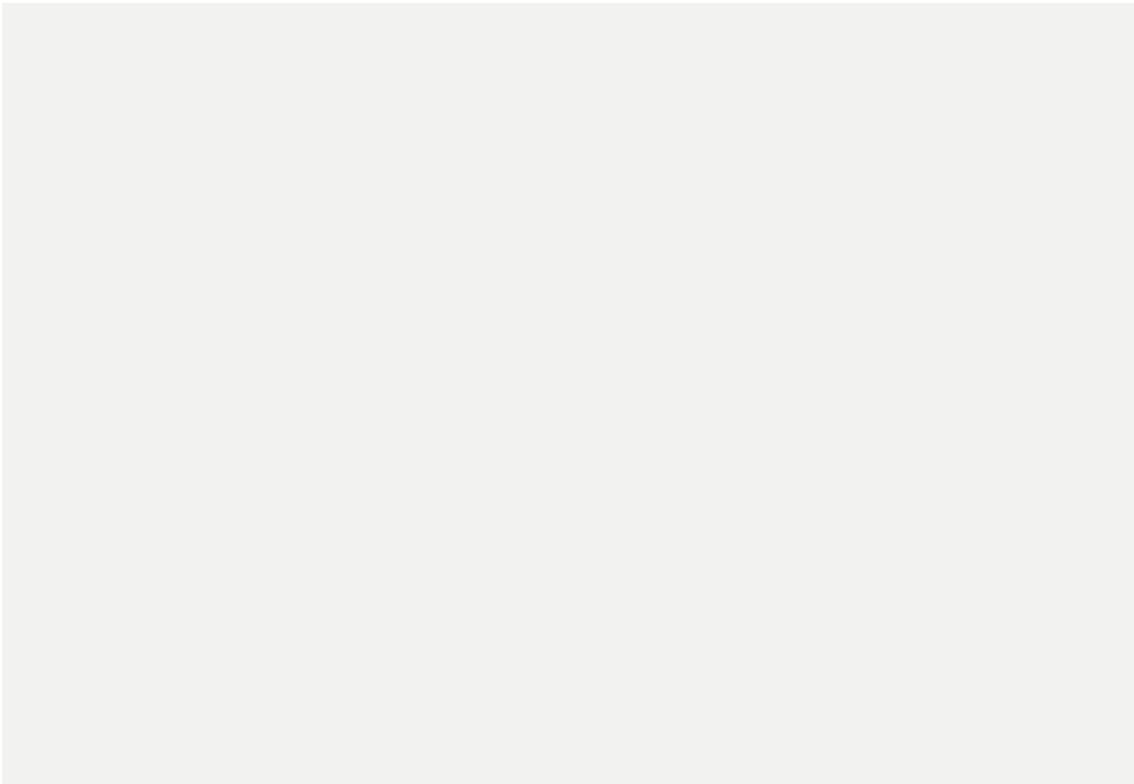
India and United States signed three Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) on Sunday to give a boost to the Centre's flagship 'smart cities' scheme.

The U.S. has agreed to partner with Indian in developing three smart cities in Allahabad, Ajmer, and Visakhapatnam.

Three MoUs were signed by the representatives of United States Trade and Development Agency and the respective Chief Secretaries of State Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh in the presence of Union Urban Development Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu.

As per the pacts, the U.S. will assist the cities in project planning, infrastructure development, feasibility studies and capacity building.

The State Governments for their part will provide resources like technical information and data related to smart cities planning; staff, logistical and travel support and budgetary resources.



WOMEN

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 27, 2015

Women empowerment must move beyond simple optics

It would not be wrong to say that if there was anything that matched the excitement and buzz that surrounded US President Barack Obama's presence at the 66th Republic Day celebration on Monday, it was the NDA government's smart decision to field lady officers in three critical ceremonial functions during the significant presidential visit.

The first was when Wing Commander Pooja Thakur became the first lady officer to lead the Inter-Service Guard of Honour, which was inspected by Mr Obama at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday. Two other instances happened during the resplendent Republic Day parade on Monday: Again, for the first time, a lady army officer — Lt Haobam Bella Devi from Manipur — unfurled the national flag and an all-women's contingent drawn from the three services marched on Rajpath.

All three instances were proud moments indeed, considering that women more often than not have been at the receiving end of things in this country, and the success of these women can infuse a 'can do' spirit in many young people.

That there is a long way to go to when it comes to achieving gender equality was underlined once again by President Pranab Mukherjee during his speech on the eve of Republic Day on Sunday. He said that it pains him "to see Mother India is not respected by her own children when it comes to the safety of women".

Adding that the nation must try to find out where it has "failed as parents, teachers and leaders" and that every Indian must take a pledge to protect women, Mr Mukherjee, quoting Benjamin Franklin, said: "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are." While India has wowed the world with its display of military might on January 26, the Republic indeed has a long way to go when it comes to some core issues: Take, for example, the sex ratio in the country.

While it has improved from 2001 to 2011 (933 in 2001 to 943 in 2011), the country's child sex ratio has declined in the same period (927 in 2001 to 919 in 2011), which means many girls are either being aborted or dying after birth. The National Crime Records Bureau data shows that crimes against women have increased 8% over five years, from 203,804 in 2009 to 309,546 in 2013.

The government has taken a bold step by launching the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao', but finally it will, as always, boil down to proper implementation of such programmes. When it comes to crimes against women, there is a lot of work left to do to ensure that they feel safe within and outside their homes. Optics at high-profile events is important, but we need to move beyond them to achieve gender parity.