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CIVIL SERVICE

HINDU, JUL 6, 2016

The stifling steel frame

PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

Economic reforms without a systemic overhaul are limited in impact. In hiking salaries of its staff without demanding superior performance, the government has foregone an opportunity for administrative reforms

Even as the 25th anniversary of the economic reforms is being observed, two unrelated developments at the Centre and the States, respectively, draw attention to the functioning of the machinery of government. We have news from Delhi that, following the recommendation of the Seventh Pay Commission, the Cabinet has approved a 23.5 per cent hike in the salary of Central government employees. Then, from Kerala there is news that its government is considering constituting an administrative reforms commission to be headed by former Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan. The Kerala government has also shown itself to be concerned over the constitutional propriety of its plan in that it has sought advice on whether the proposal would run afoul of the principle of 'office of profit', as Mr. Achuthanandan is a sitting MLA. Both announcements have implications for us as citizens.

Bureaucratic drag

I start with the news from Kerala. The said proposal for an administrative reforms commission has come from a left-wing government. This is significant, as the intellectuals linked to the communists have generally played down the will to power of the bureaucracy. They concentrate their energies on demonising the market. While it is absolutely essential following the triumphalism that has accompanied the collapse of the former Soviet Union to query the efficacy of the market mechanism, social analysis that ignores the role of the bureaucracy implies credulousness when it is not actually complicit. Perhaps the Left intellectuals avoid the critical approach as they fear alienating the bureaucracy on whom their party must rely when it eventually comes to power. From the point of view of social critique, however, this is deficient, as the bureaucracy in India has shown itself to be quite capable of slowing down, when not actually subverting, the programmes of democratically elected governments. This it is able to do with impunity given its near-exclusive control of the machinery of government. Attempted oversight has proved to be too distant to be effective. While India's top bureaucracy is protected by statute, its lower echelon achieves independence by closing ranks whenever the action of its members is challenged; the clogged courts are hardly a source of redressal for the citizen having to engage with the latter on a daily basis.

The proposal of the Kerala government is to be welcomed on two grounds. First, there is reason to believe that despite the enthusiasm of academics for the Kerala Model, the public of the State do not feel well served by its machinery of government. We may infer this from the packed attendance at the lok adalat-type meetings that were held by Oommen Chandy while he was the

Chief Minister. Mr. Chandy's office had tried to spin this to its perceived advantage as the face of a caring government. It could not have escaped its attention though that the durbar may also be read as the public having been failed in the first instance, thus amounting to waste of the Chief Minister's time and the public's money. Actually, it may be interpreted as another instance of the political class's reluctance to fix the system as that would eliminate its role as a purveyor of patronage to a beleaguered citizenry. This is in line with the disincentive of this class to finally eradicate poverty as then it can no longer appear benevolent by distributing private goods and announcing welfare schemes. So, quite unusually for an Indian political party, Kerala's Left Democratic Front has signalled the need for administrative reforms. And, going by the news reports, it has chosen the right man to head the proposed commission. Mr. Achuthanandan may not have sparkled as Chief Minister but it is clear where his heart lies. He had had the nerve to publicly remind the State's civil service that they were servants of the people. India's politicians rarely read the riot act to the bureaucracy as they rely on it to further their personal interests.

The case for accountability

Unlike in the States, some of which have a legacy of administrations instituted by Indian princes, the protocols of the Central civil service have been borrowed lock, stock and barrel from the East India Company. The bureaucracy was both the instrument for extracting India's wealth and repressing the native population so that the former activity could proceed unhindered. It is no coincidence that the Collector had combined tax collection with the maintenance of law and order. Unfortunately, not only did we not pension off the Indian Civil Service in 1947 but we actually continued with its privileges. Only this month has the Madras High Court ruled that the investigation of the conduct of public servants no longer requires a nod from the government.

It is noteworthy that we have witnessed two major changes in the economic policy regime, first in the 1950s and then in 1991, but there has been no serious administrative reform. When these reforms do materialise they should be focussed on establishing the principle of accountability of the bureaucracy to the citizen. It is not surprising that there is no such provision currently. The legendary concern within the Government of India for procedure when it comes to matters financial is all of a piece with this. The East India Company was a profit-making concern. Its business model, so to speak, had been extraction and it aimed to achieve this via what political scientist Sunil Khilnani has termed "cheap governance". The financial oversight had not stemmed from a commitment to probity as much as commercial consideration. In this governance model there had been no room for sensitivity to the aspirations of India's populace. In fact the 'steel frame' and the Indian Police had been designed to thwart them.

The consequences for India of retaining the protocols of a colonial bureaucracy are obvious. The system is imbued with 'procedural rationality' where the focus is not on the outcome but on adherence to procedure. The waste of resources that can accompany such a practice is overlooked, for outcomes are of no concern; procedure is. It is only when we extend our vision beyond the secretariats, of both the Centre and the States, that we even begin to contemplate the magnitude of the resulting waste and hardship to the people of this country. Once we see the

public sector as extending to all spheres of government from the top echelons of the bureaucracy to the local government apparatus we would find that economic reforms without overhauling the administration can only have limited impact.

Need for political will

In my book *Economic Growth in India: History and Prospect*, I have identified three areas in which increased public spending is not having the intended impact, namely irrigation, education and provision for mother-and-child care. This stems from the inability to enforce appropriate behaviour in the bureaucracy. When a nation's ability to expand the production of food or advance human development is hobbled by ineffective governance, purveying further liberalisation of the economic policy regime is tantamount to evading the real issue. The central role of administration in economic progress has been recognised in the characterisation of East Asian governments as bureaucratic authoritarian industrialising regimes (BAIR). While this is no case for turning authoritarian it does suggest that the Indian bureaucracy too could have been a force for progress were it effectively governed by the political leadership.

We often hear of the potential of information technology (IT) to alter the state of affairs with regard to governance. Such a view appears to underpin the Digital India initiative currently on. It should be given a chance to succeed, but the limitations of a purely technological approach in the context may be borne in mind. Kentaro Toyama, formerly of Microsoft Research India, has shown how IT intervention has limited impact on developmental outcomes when the political will is absent. This is because technology can only be the 'force multiplier', it is not the force itself. The positive intent must originate in politics and motivate the bureaucracy to deliver on its mandate.

Most evaluations of the Cabinet's decision to raise the salary of the Central civil service miss the point. They have focussed on the quantum of the increase and declare it reasonable as 10 years have passed since the last Central Pay Commission award. This fails to take into account that in a global comparison of average salary in relation to the country's per capita income, India's Central civil service has historically been far ahead of its counterparts in Asia, Europe and the United States. By bequeathing a salary hike without stipulating superior performance, the Government of India has foregone an opportunity for administrative reforms.

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The consequences for India of retaining the protocols of a colonial bureaucracy are obvious; the focus is not on the outcome but on adherence to procedure

TIMES OF INDIA, JUL 6, 2016

7th pay panel doesn't cheer corpns

Mayank Manohar

NEW DELHI: Having faced the ire of workers striking work at not having received salaries in time, the municipal [corporations](#) in Delhi are presumably underwhelmed by the central government endorsing the [Seventh](#) Pay Commission report. The East Delhi and North Delhi Municipal Corporations are likely to go into a financial tailspin if the recommendations on hiking the salaries of workers by 17-23.6% are implemented.

Senior officials claim the new salary bill will represent a burden of at least 1,700 crore. The current expenditure on salary and pension in the three civic bodies is 5,829 crore. Once the new scales are effected, the expenditure will increase to approximately 7,492 crore.

The three corporations employ around 1.27 lakh people. Having failed time and again to boost their revenues, the corporations, except the south body, rely mostly on [funds](#) released by the Delhi government to [Pay](#) their salaries.

At present, East Corporation generates around 700 crore from property tax, advertisements, parking charges and conversion fees, but its payroll burden is close to 1,000 crore. North Corporation is in a worse position, with revenues of around 1,000 crore against a salary bill of 2,800 crore. This gap between income and the costs has, in the past year, led to periodical employee strikes against delay in salary disbursal.

Harsh Malhotra, former mayor of East Corporation, said unless Delhi government implemented the recommendations of the Fourth Delhi Finance Commission the municipalities would get no respite. The finance [panel](#) had suggested raising the share of revenues for the corporations from 5.5% to 12.5%. "While expenditure has gone up with time, we continue to get the same amount from the government," said Malhotra.

The non-implementation of the Delhi Finance Commission report and the pay commission's recommendations are worrying even financially sound South Corporation. "We are doing fine

currently because we have been able to generate revenues, but if the Fourth DFC report is not implemented then even we will face a financial crisis in a year or two," said Subhash Arya, leader of the house in the corporation. "We will have to implement the Seventh Pay Commission award and we want state government to cooperate in providing better facilities to the public."

The three civic bodies could have increased their revenue generation this year by implementing the third report of the Municipal Valuation Committee that suggested upgrading the categories of commercial establishments to generate an additional 100 crore for each corporation. But ahead of the municipal elections in 2017, increasing taxes did not seem to have been considered politically wise. "This should ideally have been implemented in 2012, but the corporations kept delaying the approval," said a North Corporation official. "Now with polls in 2017, the political wing has decided to sit on the suggestions with the vote banks in mind," said a North Corporation official

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 5, 2016

Civil services aspirants to be spared two additional papers

Aloke Tikku

From 1951 to 1979, aspirants hoping to get into the IAS or IFS had to write three optional papers – unlike two for aspirants for other services – and then, two more additional papers. The optional papers were of the graduate level but the syllabus of the two additional papers was of postgraduate level.

A panel set up by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is set to reject demands to reintroduce additional papers in the Civil Services Examination for candidates aspiring to join the IAS and the IFS.

The panel headed by former education secretary BS Baswan – set up by public service recruiter last year for another overhaul of the examination – is slated to give its report by mid-August.

Officers from the two services – Indian Administrative Service and Indian Foreign Service – had demanded that the UPSC either hold a separate exam for the two services or at least get aspirants to write the additional papers to qualify.

Apart from looking at the syllabus and pattern of the exam, the commission also asked the panel if it should continue recruiting candidates for 24 diverse services – ranging from the IAS to the Indian Railway Personnel Service – from the same civil services examination.

Over four lakh graduates appear for the examination every year that offers fewer than one in four hundred a chance of success. The 1,000 candidates who clear the three-stage examination are recruited to any of the 24 civil services depending on their performance.

But it is the IAS that is the hot favourite.

More than 90% of all successful candidates list the administrative service as their first choice. Only about 180 get it.

The rest have to settle for anything ranging from the Indian Police Service and the Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax) to the Indian Information Service and the Indian Audit & Accounts Service.

A senior government official said the committee has not found any reason to tinker with the unified civil services examination and make candidates write extra papers for the IAS.

From 1951 to 1979, aspirants hoping to get into the IAS or IFS had to write three optional papers – unlike two for aspirants for other services – and then, two more additional papers. The optional papers were of the graduate level but the syllabus of the two additional papers was of postgraduate level.

It was these extra papers for the IAS and IFS that formed the basis for placing the two services on a higher pedestal.

But this pattern ended in 1979 on the recommendations of the DS Kothari committee that sought to end the hierarchy among civil services. The government implemented this recommendation but could never really withdraw the special treatment that the two services got.

As the chorus for parity between IAS and non-IAS civil services became louder last year, the IAS and IFS backed the proposal to reintroduce the additional papers that would set them apart from other civil services.

But for non-IAS officers that have just lost the battle for parity, this could be just nothing more than a consolation prize.

The Seventh Central Pay Commission recommended parity between IAS and non-IAS officers but the government – acting on the advice of the influential IAS officers – shoved the recommendation into the deep freezer.

The government said it did not take a call since there was no unanimity on the recommendation of the three-member panel. One of the three, Vivek Rae, gave his dissent note, arguing against diluting the IAS' status. Rae is a retired IAS officer.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JUL 4, 2016

7th Pay Commission report decoded; here's where the money will go

Pay revisions typically boost consumption, overstretch fiscal accounts and stoke inflation

By: [Saikat Neogi](#)

The Seventh Pay Panel payout, however, is lower than the 40% hike after the implementation of the Sixth Pay Panel recommendations which came into effect from January 2006

With the Cabinet clearing the Seventh Central Pay Commission recommendations, the boost to private consumption stimulus would be around Rs 46,800 crore, or 30 basis points (bps) of GDP, according to an analysis done by Kotak Economic Research. The government will get an additional tax revenue of Rs 13,000 crore and households would be able to save Rs 25,000 crore.

The government will be spending an additional Rs 84,900 crore on pay and pensions in FY17. Of this, the Union Budget will bear Rs 60,600 crore, while the Railways will bear Rs 24,300 crore. A major difference between the previous pay commissions and the Seventh Pay Commission is that there is hardly any lag between the time of recommendation and implementation. As a result, the size of the arrears to be paid will be much lower compared to the payouts of the Fifth and Sixth Pay Commissions.

Kotak research estimates that the impact on savings will be 17bps of GDP and towards tax revenues it would be 9bps of GDP. An increase in private spending will push up demand for consumer durables and automobiles. Now that the central government has accepted the report of the Central Pay Commission, state governments will follow suit after a gap of six months to a year. States are likely to increase expenditure by 1.5% of GDP towards salaries and pension, which would further stimulate private consumption over the next couple of years.

Past experience shows that these pay revisions typically boost consumption, overstretch fiscal accounts and stoke inflation. While the Sixth Pay Panel recommendations boosted purchases of automobiles and consumer durables and investment in real estate significantly between FY09 and FY11, several other factors—such as reduction in excise duty to 8% from 16% between February 2008 and February 2009, [RBI](#)'s reduction of policy rate by 425bps between October 2008 and April 2009 in response to the global financial crisis, and favourable government policies for the rural economy—too contributed to strong consumption demand. The sharp decline in interest rates resulted in lower EMIs for automobiles and real estate and boosted demand.

Continued strong investment by the private sector even after the global financial crisis and a quick recovery in profits of the private sector after the slump in FY09 also contributed to strong job creation and robust consumption demand. Between FY10 and FY12, private final consumption expenditure grew at 60% of GDP from 58% between FY06 and FY09.

As per the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Panel, the pay, allowances and pensions of central government employees and pensioners would rise by an average of 23.5%. The

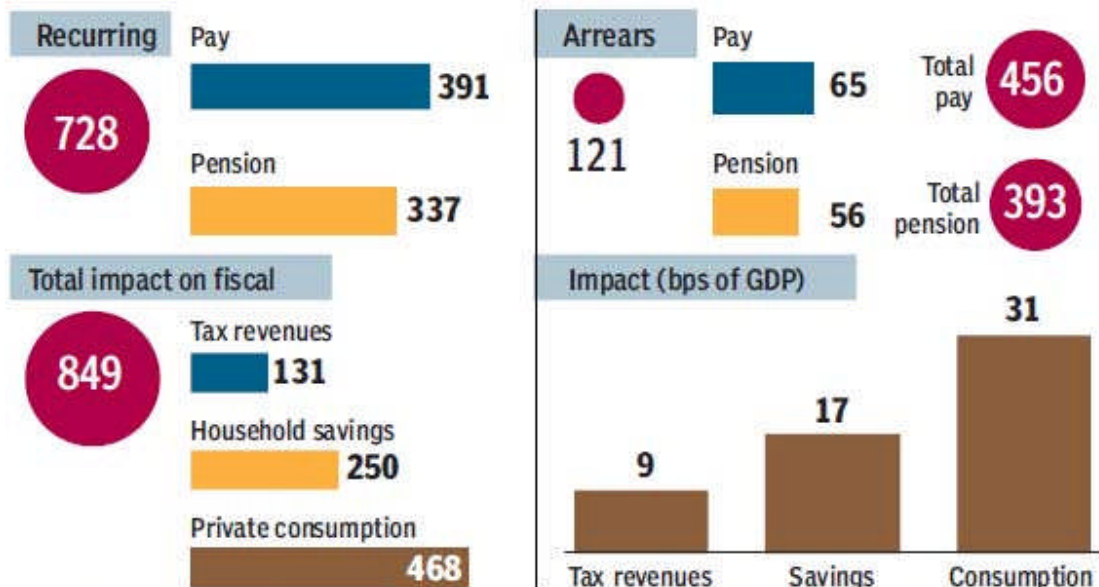
government has deferred the allowances for another four months, which would be implemented prospectively.

The Seventh Pay Panel payout, however, is lower than the 40% hike after the implementation of the Sixth Pay Panel recommendations which came into effect from January 2006. The increase in payout to government employees and pensioners will boost household savings, which dropped to 19.1% of GDP in FY15 from a peak of 25.2% in FY10.

Gross domestic savings, which also include the private and government sectors, stagnated at 33% of GDP in FY14 and FY15 from a high of 36.8% in FY08. Higher savings could give a leg-up to investment, which has declined from a peak of 38% of GDP in FY08 to 30.8% in FY15, and further down to 29.3% in FY16.

Economic impact of seventh pay panel implementation

In FY17; ₹ billion



Effective tax rate for current employees assumed at 18% and for pensioners at 12.5%

Marginal propensity to consume for current employees assumed at 70% & for pensioners at 60%

Source: Kotak Economic Research

TRIBUNE, JUL 1, 2016

Seventh Pay Commission to cost state Rs4,000 crore

Impact on state exchequer

- 7th pay panel recommendation will put extra burden of , Rs 4,000 crore on the state exchequer
- Estimated salary bill of the state for 2016-17 is Rs 19,311 crore, while pension estimates are Rs 5,640 crore
- The pension bill is likely to increase by more than Rs 1,000 crore
- The 6th Pay Commission in 2008 had put an additional financial burden of Rs 5,125 crore on the government
- There are 1.83 lakh pensioners and 31,000 widows of the deceased pensioners and 2.76 lakh employees

Parvesh Sharma

With Finance Minister Capt Abhimanyu announcing to implement the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission, the state exchequer is likely to get an extra burden of Rs 4,000 crore.

Presently, the 2016-17 estimated salary bill of the state is Rs 19,311 crore, while pension estimates are Rs 5,640 crore.

The Sixth Pay Commission in 2008 had put an additional financial burden of Rs 5,125 crore on the state government.

The state government is already paying interim relief to its employees which would be adjusted after the implementation of the recommendations.

Sources said there were nearly 1.83 lakh pensioners and 31,000 widows of the deceased pensioners and 2.76 lakh employees in the state.

Figures of the finance department show that the pension bill of the state has been increasing every year.

During 2015-16, it increased to Rs 5,400 crore from Rs 3,204 crore in 2011-12.

The annual increase in pension bill is between Rs 400-500 crore, but with the implementation of the 7th Pay Commission, it is likely to increase by more than Rs 1,000 crore.

“We would implement the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission for the state government employees at the earliest. We had made a provision of Rs 4,000 crore for the Seventh Pay Commission in our annual Budget.

“The state government has always taken all required steps for welfare of employees and in future also keep doing it,” said Finance Minister Capt Abhimanyu.

During 2015-16, the salary bill had reached Rs 15,514 crore from Rs 10,615 crore in 2012-13.

During the past six years, the salary bill has witnessed the maximum increase of Rs 2,218 crore from 2014-15 to 2015-16, as the former Bhupinder Singh Hooda led-Congress government had resorted to large scale recruitments during the election year.

Haryana to implement recommendations

Sonepat: Finance Minister Capt Abhimanyu today said the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission would be implemented in the state from the same date and with same grades. Addressing media persons in Kharkhoda, he said speedy development of the state was the priority of the government, adding the process to set up an Industrial Model Township (IMT) in partnership with the Wanda Group of Industries, China, near Kharkhoda, had begun. He claimed development projects such as the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway would promote business activity and generate employment for the youth.

TRIBUNE, JUL 1, 2016

More cash in hand

Short-term joy, long-term pain

PAY hikes bring cheers for some, heartburns for others. Social tensions and protests rise as inequalities increase. Comparisons become inevitable. IAS officers resent fat corporate salaries. Defence officers complain of discrimination and seek pay parity with bureaucrats. Reacting to the Central staff bonanza, farmers demand a debt waiver. A vast majority working in the unorganised sector has neither job security nor time-bound, inflation-linked wage increases. As more money chases fewer goods, prices would rise and the poor would feel the maximum pain.

With tax hikes and oil gains the Centre can manage the higher pay burden but for states it would be ruinous. State politicians too have elections to win and they also pursue politics of appeasement. Punjab’s already overstretched finances could spell disaster since ruling politicians

here are not known for paring wasteful expenditure, shedding administrative flab or using technology to cut costs. Chief Minister Badal would not sack the unwanted Chief Parliamentary Secretaries or shut unnecessary PSUs like the cow board but slash posts at the lower level and reduce the budgetary allocations to hospitals, schools, colleges and universities. Countrywide, money which should have been spent on education, health and infrastructure would go into unproductive spending. Babus' pay hikes are resented because in their interaction with people, they appear uninterested and unexcited, if not unhelpful, extortionist and corrupt. Governments justify pay hikes, saying they need to attract and retain talent. For people what matters more is an efficient, hassle-free delivery of services.

Pay hikes have a cascading effect. The cost of producing goods and offering services goes up. China once attracted massive foreign investment in its manufacturing sector because it was a low-cost economy. With regular wage increases it has lost that cutting edge and is forced to move to high-technology industries. India's consumption-driven growth following the Western model needs a relook; otherwise it would extract a high price in terms of environmental damage and exploitation of natural resources. The pay-driven boost to car buying would soon demand wider roads, more flyovers and better traffic management. The Seventh Pay Commission report is actually for the benefit of car-makers, not the employees.

DECCAN HERALD, JUL 1, 2016

Pay revision to weaken economy

The Central government has taken the easy and populist option by deciding to implement the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission. Over one crore Central government employees and pensioners will directly benefit from the bonanza being given to them, but there is little thought about its implications and consequences for the economy. There is no doubt that government employees have to be paid well and kept happy so that they work to the best of their abilities and contribute to the society. But the policy of continuous increases in the salaries, allowances and other benefits of the staff without any insistence on their obligations to the society or accountability will lead to the weakening of the administration and the economy. The governments usually have no option but to accept the proposals for salary revisions made by the pay commissions. These are actually political decisions because no government can withstand the pressure from organised employees.

The Seventh Pay Commission has, like others in the past, suggested measures to reduce the flab of the bureaucracy and to increase the efficiency and productivity of the staff. But these steps

never get implemented. The government departments are overstaffed and the work culture is not good. Increasing the salaries of the bloated staff, along with the rising cost of administration, increases wasteful expenditure. Salary increases without addressing these issues cannot do much good. Finance minister Arun Jaitley has said that higher salaries will attract better talent to government service. But what has discouraged talented persons from joining government service is not salary levels but the poor work culture, which will remain unchanged. The additional salary burden will be too heavy for the stricken railways, which will have to find new resources to stay on track. The impact of an outgo of over Rs 1 lakh crore on the country's fiscal situation will be considerable, though the government says it has provided for a major part of it. If fiscal deficit targets are to be met, capital expenditure will have to be reduced, and it will set back economic growth.

The large amount of money which will go into the market as salary and arrears will spur inflation which, after seeming to be under control, is showing signs of a spike. A good part of the salary increase is likely to be neutralised by the rise in prices. State governments and government undertakings will also have to increase salaries and

that will add to the pressure. It is pointed out that more money will create more demand and that will give a fresh momentum to economic growth. But it is doubtful whether the net impact will be positive for the economy.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JUL 1, 2016

7th Pay Commission: Arun Jaitley made deficit hope float on perks; find out how

The Centre's fiscal deficit for the first two months of FY17 was about Rs 2.29 lakh crore or 42.9% of the full-year target of Rs 5.34 lakh crore. In the same period last year, the deficit was 37.5% of the corresponding annual target.

Revenue receipts during April-May were Rs 69,060 crore, or 4.8% of the full-year target; in the same period last year, revenue receipts were 4.4% of the full-year target. (Reuters)

The Centre's fiscal deficit for the first two months of FY17 was about Rs 2.29 lakh crore or 42.9% of the full-year target of Rs 5.34 lakh crore. In the same period last year, the deficit was 37.5% of the corresponding annual target.

In April-May this year, capital (Plan+non-Plan) spending was Rs 33,231 crore or 13.5% of the full-year target, while it was Rs 37,743 crore (15.6%) in the year-ago period. Plan expenditure stood at Rs 90,570 crore or 16.5% of the full-year estimate, an improvement compared to Rs 62,106 crore (13.3%) in the year-ago period. Spending on rural development, urban development, agriculture, aviation and power topped under this category.

The April-May net tax collection was Rs 49,690 crore, which is 4.7% of the estimate for the full year; in the corresponding period a year ago, the same stood at Rs 19,889 crore or 2.2% of that year's target.

Revenue receipts during April-May were Rs 69,060 crore, or 4.8% of the full-year target; in the same period last year, revenue receipts were 4.4% of the full-year target.

According to the data compiled by the Controller General of Accounts, the total expenditure was Rs 2.98 lakh crore in April-May or 15.1% of the budget estimate (BE) for the full year. Total expenditure in the corresponding period last year was Rs 2.63 lakh crore, or 14.8% of the BE.

On Wednesday, the Centre accepted the 7th Pay Commission's recommendations regarding the remuneration of Central government staff (even as it has deferred a decision on those related to allowances) and estimated that this would cost it Rs 84,933 crore in FY17.

While the Centre and the railways have provided (although the former did not make this explicit in the general Budget) about Rs 74,500 crore in FY17, they will have to find another Rs 10,000 crore to meet the outgo of Rs 84,933 crore.

Analysts estimate that the Centre would get Rs 13,000 crore in taxes from the government staff due to the pay hike, but official sources indicated that this was foreseen at the time of making the Budget.

If the Centre accepted the pay panel's proposals in full and released the entire amount to its staff and pensioners in FY17, the additional outgo would be Rs 1.02 lakh crore.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

UP Chief Secretary Alok Ranjan retires, to become Akhilesh's chief advisor

LUCKNOW: Another storm in the cup may be brewing for the faction ridden Mulayam Singh Yadav clan. The resolution would give ample indicators of which way the wind is blowing between the two sides divided broadly into the older generation of SP leaders and the younger ones led by Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav. Alok Ranjan, the chief secretary of UP for two years retired on Thursday but the government could not decide on the new CS. Despite the fact that the government was aware of the vacancy coming up and holding informal meetings among senior leaders over the new name, no decision could be reached, as each faction in the government is pushing for its own loyal bureaucrat. While it is a telling example of the way Uttar Pradesh bureaucracy has come to be divided on party lines and now even on and inner party factional lines, the indecision by the government has left the state without its top bureaucrat. And it is likely to remain so for another week as Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav has left for England and Germany with his family. He will return only on July 4. Agricultural Production Commissioner Pravir Kumar has been made the acting chief secretary for the interim period. He remains in the race to be appointed full time chief secretary as he enjoys a good image but had earlier had a run in with senior minister Azam Khan. Kumar, however, enjoys confidence of Akhilesh Yadav, who made him the Agricultural Production Commissioner, the second seniormost position in the IAS bureaucracy. Shivpal Yadav is gunning for his trusted bureaucrat Deepak Singhal, who is currently serving him as Principal Secretary Irrigation. Singhal has long been working under Shivpal Yadav and enjoys his trust but Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav is said to be against him for his controversial past.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

A good hike is half the job done

The Centre has opted for the right way to hike the salaries of its employees. On average the hike has been 2.5 times, by merging the dearness allowance with the basic salary. The basic salary of the cabinet secretary has been raised from Rs 90,000 to Rs 2,50,000 a month. This is justified because salaries at lower levels in government compare well with private sector peers while at upper levels they don't. Referring to this, finance minister Arun Jaitley said that after the implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations government salaries "are distinctly higher than market salaries and private sector salaries". When seen in the light of the fact that government services have facilities such as official residence, phone and vehicle, the statement is correct.

But there are many issues that remain and hopefully they will be touched upon in due course. The Commission had been mandated to look at the "best global practices" and see if they applied to conditions prevailing in India. However, this brings into train things such as officials' expertise and domain knowledge, rationalising the government workforce, and making wages linked to productivity, which the Commission has recommended. To put these through the labyrinthine processes of administration would require heeding the suggestions of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, set up in 2005. A group of ministers was indeed formed to look at its recommendations, which are now said to be 'at various stages of implementation'. We have too much governance where little is necessary and a bit of shortage where it is needed. For example, a city like Delhi needs more police persons and the country as a whole more IPS officers, while there is a clear case for reducing the number of entrants to the IAS, which, of all the class I central government services, is the only generalist one. And yet it is the premier service and the posts of virtually all the regulators — whether they are in telecom or capital markets — are manned by serving or retired IAS persons. And the posts that they occupy presuppose high-level knowledge of banking, taxation, finance, law, etc.

The Commission has also recommended retiring people after 20 years of service. However, even if that is not possible now, the government should look at ways of retraining its staff after every five years, and the promotion of a government servant, at any level, should depend on his or her adaptability to new situations. And since the job of a Commission is not just of balancing the books but taking a holistic view of administration, which the present one has done, the onus is now on the government to do the execution part. Only then can we have 'minimum government, maximum governance'.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

Congress attacks pay hike as ungenerous

NEW DELHI: The Congress party criticised the salary and pension hikes approved by the Cabinet on June 29, accusing the government of "deviating from the past practice" of improving upon the pay commission's recommendations to ensure better benefits for employees. The party has also extended its support to calls by various labour unions for a strike from July 11 against the move. "It was expected the committee constituted by the government to look into pay commission recommendations will recommend further improvement on the proposals, especially in the case of lowpaid employees, including the armed forces," AICC spokesperson Ajay Maken said. "But the committee failed to do so, at the behest of political bosses. Therefore, this is the worst recommendation in the 70year history of pay commissions." Maken said: "The NDA government has accepted the report in toto (hike of just 14.27%) without giving any respite to the employees." Stay on top of business news with The Economic Times

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

CPC recommendations 'worst' , will support July 11 strike by government employees: Congress

NEW DELHI: Congress today came out in support of the proposed July 11 strike by central government employees in protest against the 7th Pay Commission recommendations which the party termed as the "worst" in the last 70 years and accused the Modi government of being "unjust" to them. Senior party spokesman Ajay Maken said the central government employees are a "frustrated and disappointed" lot as the government decided "not to make improvement" in the recommendations. "It is unfortunate that the employees, who were given 40 per cent hike in their respective pay in the past by previous governments, had now been recommended only 14.27 per cent. This is unjust and humiliating for the beneficiaries," he told reporters. Noting that the Federation of Government Employees, which includes employees of Indian Railways, civilian employees of Ordnance Factories and Post and Telegraph, has decided to go on strike from July 11 to express their resentment, he said "We support them and hope good sense will prevail and government of India will review the decision." "In the history of CPC in the last about 70 years, this is the worst recommendations and needed major surgery to make it acceptable to the employees and meet their expectation up to some extent," Maken, a former Union Minister, said. To a question about the recommendations with regard to the Armed Forces

employees and whether Congress supports them, he replied in the affirmative. "It is not that the Armed Forces are getting more and the others are getting less. Armed Forces are, rather in certain ways, are bigger sufferers.", he remarked. Making a strong pitch for a better deal to government employees, he asked "If you do not have the best brains working in the government, then how can you expect government or the government employees to protect the interest visavis the multinationals in this era of globalisation?" An RSSaffiliate Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh has already raised a banner of revolt against the Centre's decision on the Pay Commission recommendations and declared it would organise countrywide protests on July 8.

CONSUMERS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

It's a flat world: Consumer choices bridge India's rural-urban divide

Zia Haq

Spending patterns in cities and villages are fast converging, as rural households now pay for most goods and services usually associated with urban lifestyles -- from microwaves and laundry services to air travel and even out-of-home dining, a landmark government survey shows.

The basket of goods and services that now hogs major portions of rural budgets is getting bigger, underscoring the importance of keeping rural incomes steady with better jobs and agriculture. The upshot is that since rural demand accounts for a large share of overall sales, falling rural incomes can dent other sectors of Asia's third-largest economy.

Although buses remain the main mode of transport in both urban and rural India, 0.04% rural households reported travelling by air, compared to 0.14% by their urban counterparts. Also, rural households now spend about 21% of their monthly service-related budget on eating out, compared to 22% by urban households, indeed another sign of converging lifestyles.

Across villages and cities, consumer spending habits don't seem to vary much, data from the 72nd round of the National Sample Survey shows, but rural households tend to spend a significantly higher amount in some categories as a proportion of their monthly budgets, mainly because of comparatively lower incomes.

This is the first focused survey on consumer habits across India by the National Sample Survey Organisation, carried out between July 2014 and June 2015.

For instance, the data show 21.2% of rural households, compared to 27.0% urban households, reported acquiring "major durable goods" during the reference period. These are households that don't own a "non-agricultural enterprise". Therefore, such spending purely reflects lifestyle-related consumption.

The survey defines major durable goods, such as large furniture, notebooks, smartphones (but not ordinary cellphones), water purifier, air conditioners and heating devices, apart from cars and tractors etc.

YESTERDAY'S LUXURIES TODAY'S NECESSITIES

As a proportion of household budgets, rural India spends significantly higher on some categories of goods and services, mirroring urban consumption habits

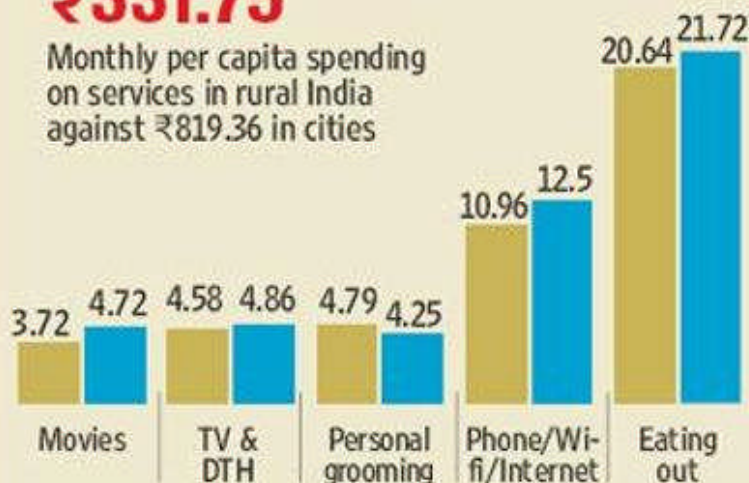
Figures represent the spending on select categories of goods and services as a percentage of monthly expenditures. Other spends include those on furniture, water purifiers, crockery, transport, laundry and entertainment

■ Rural
 ■ Urban
 (Figures in %)

SERVICES

₹331.75

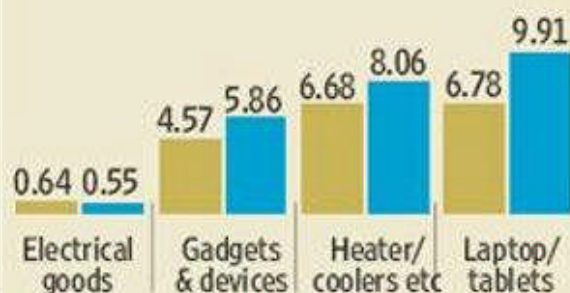
Monthly per capita spending on services in rural India against ₹819.36 in cities



GOODS

₹1,469

Monthly per capita spending on goods in rural India against ₹2,602 in cities



“This tells you how income is being spent, not how it is earned. Not much jobs are being generated in rural India outside the construction sector,” said Prof. Partha Saha, who teaches economics at the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy. “So, one part of it is aspiration. The other is flow of money from urban to rural India. Better connectivity and power supply are major factors. It is a well-accepted fact that when you build a road, then you are tackling poverty far better than just giving subsidized ration,” he said.

The number of rural Indians paying for personal grooming is slightly higher than urban folks, the survey shows. According to the data, nearly 9 out of 10 rural households reported spending at least 11% of their monthly services spending on personal grooming, visits to salons and barber shops etc.

“This (survey) will give an insight into the extent of expenditure on ‘partly capital goods’ and expected to be used by policymakers,” the survey office said, since the data covers both purchases put to private and entrepreneurial use.

A range of rural consumer spending makes the rural economy important for overall growth. A back-to-back drought has shriveled rural incomes, causing agriculture growth to first tumble to minus 0.2% in 2014-15 and then 1.2% in 2015-16.

The survey sample size included 7,969 villages and 6,048 urban blocks. In absolute terms, however, village families spend far less than their city counterparts. A rural individual, on an average, spends Rs 331.75 on services a month, compared to an urban individual’s Rs 819.36. On goods, an average village individual spends Rs 1469 a month compared to Rs 2602 by a city-dweller.

CORRUPTION

HINDU, JUL 5, 2016

[Arvind Kejriwal's close aide held on graft charges](#)

The Central Bureau of Investigation on Monday arrested IAS officer Rajendra Kumar, the Principal Secretary to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, and four others on corruption charges. They were accused of giving 'undue favours' to a private firm in awarding government contracts worth over Rs. 50 crore.

The arrests triggered a fresh round of acrimony between the Centre and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Delhi government, with the latter also pointing out to the coincidence of large scale transfer of senior officials by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) from Delhi on Monday without its consent.

Mr. Kumar, an IAS officer belonging to the 1989 batch of the Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre and the recipient of the Prime Minister's award for excellence in public administration in 2006-07, was handpicked by Mr. Kejriwal and is considered a close confidant of the Delhi Chief Minister.

The official was summoned to the CBI headquarters on Monday morning, along with with Tarun Sharma, a Deputy Secretary in Mr. Kejriwal's office.

Three other private persons were also called for questioning to the CBI headquarters.

After being questioned for half a day, the CBI decided to place the two officers under arrest, along with Ashok Kumar, a close aide and school friend of Mr. Kumar, and the owners of a private firm Sandeep Kumar and Dinesh Gupta.

The CBI had registered a case against Mr. Kumar and others in December last year, alleging that the officer had abused his official position by "favouring a particular firm in the last few years in getting tenders of Delhi government departments".

The charges pressed by the CBI are under Sections 120-B of IPC (criminal conspiracy), and 13(2), 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act (criminal conspiracy, criminal misconduct etc.) for allegedly favouring a private company — Endeavour Systems Pvt. Ltd. — in five contracts.

The CBI alleged that the accused had entered into a criminal conspiracy and caused a loss of Rs. 12 crore to the Delhi government in the award of contracts between 2007 and 2015. It claimed they had taken 'undue benefit' of over Rs. 3 crore.

DISABLED PERSONS

HINDU, JUL 6, 2016

Disabled and disheartened

Progressive legislation and enabling administrative orders constitute the policy framework under which the government deals with the rights of persons with disabilities and seeks to provide them equal opportunities. However, it is only when tested in practice that the real efficacy of the policy is known. Recent court verdicts suggest that the implementation of measures conferring rights on the people with disabilities is still far from adequate. This is in spite of statutory reservation in jobs and other measures formulated with great care. The Supreme Court's recent verdict, declaring illegal two office memoranda of 1997 and 2005 on the manner in which reservation of seats for the disabled should be handled, is the latest instance of the government's policy approach being exposed as inadequate. Though the verdict in *Rajeev Kumar Gupta and Others v. Union of India* arose out of a specific grievance that the disabled were denied the benefits of reservation in Group A and Group B posts in the Prasar Bharati Corporation, it is applicable across the entire spectrum of public employment in the two categories. The court ruled that limiting the disabled quota to posts filled through direct recruitment in the two groups is in contravention of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995; also, that the disabled quota will extend to promotions. It directed that vacancies among posts identified for the disabled must be filled through reservation, regardless of the mode of recruitment — be it promotion or direct recruitment. The ruling has significantly enhanced the scope for the disabled to gain employment in the higher echelons.

In October 2013, in *Union of India v. National Federation of the Blind*, the court had noted the “alarming reality” that the disabled were out of jobs not because their disability came in the way, but rather due to “social and practical barriers”. Even then, the court had noted that some provisions of the 2005 office memorandum were inconsistent with the 1995 Act. However, the government is yet to modify it suitably. In the latest ruling, a Division Bench has said it is disheartening to note the admittedly low numbers of persons with disabilities — much below the 3 per cent earmarked for them — in government employment years after the enactment. It is time the Centre evolved a more inclusive policy that is in full conformity with its legal obligations. It should activate the UPA government's proposal to enact an improved law. If necessary, the draft Bill of 2014 could be revamped after wider consultation with stakeholders. The ultimate objective should be to render complete justice to the country's estimated 2.68 crore disabled people.

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 4, 2016

Supreme Court: 3 per cent quota for disabled must in all posts

The court was ruling on two petitions which challenged this policy in recruitment to state-run Prasar Bharati. S K Rungta, the only visually impaired senior counsel in the country, led the legal challenge.

Written by [Utkarsh Anand](#)

This is the first authoritative judgment that has explicitly directed the government to do away with the distinction and give benefits of reservation to the differently-abled, without any classification. (File Photo)

QUASHING THE central government's earlier orders on restricting reservation for the differently-abled in promotion to Group A and Group B posts, the Supreme Court has ruled that three per cent reservation shall be provided to them in all posts and services under the Government of India.

The government had confined such reservation to Group C and Group D posts. In its memoranda issued in 1997 and 2005, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) had also created a distinction between posts to be filled through direct recruitment and those through promotion, while stating that no reservation shall be provided in posts to be filled through promotion in Group A and Group B categories.

In its ruling on June 30 — the order was released on Saturday — a bench of Justices J Chelameswar and Abhay M Sapre declared the DoPT memoranda as “illegal and inconsistent” with the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.

“We further direct the government to extend three per cent reservation to PWD (persons with disability) in all identified posts in Group A and Group B, irrespective of the mode of filling up such posts,” said the bench.

“It is disheartening to note that low numbers of PWD (much below three per cent) are in government employment long years after the 1995 Act. Barriers to their entry must, therefore, be scrutinised by rigorous standards within the legal framework of the 1995 Act,” the bench said.

In the past, while some high courts ordered reservation in such posts for the disabled, the central government appealed against these orders.

This is the first authoritative judgment that has explicitly directed the government to do away with the distinction and give benefits of reservation to the differently-abled, without any classification.

The court was ruling on two petitions which challenged this policy in recruitment to state-run Prasar Bharati. S K Rungta, the only visually impaired senior counsel in the country, led the legal challenge.

The government opposed concession to the disabled, contending that they have no right to demand reservation in promotion to identified Group A and Group B posts. It also cited the nine-judge bench ruling by the apex court in the Indra Sawhney (Mandal reservation) case, to maintain reservation should be confined to recruitment at the initial level, and not at the stage of promotions.

But the bench dismissed the government's arguments, noting that once the posts for the disabled have been identified under Section 32 of the Act, the purpose behind such identification cannot be frustrated by prescribing a mode of recruitment which results in denial of statutory reservation.

“It would be a device to defraud PWD of the statutory benefit. Once a post is identified, it means that a PWD is fully capable of discharging the functions associated with the identified post. Once found to be so capable, reservation under Section 33 to an extent of not less than 3 per cent must

follow. Once the post is identified, it must be reserved for PWD irrespective of the mode of recruitment adopted by the State for filling up of the said post,” it held.

The bench further said that Indra Sawhney’s case shall not impose a bar on reservation for the disabled, since the principle laid down in this case is applicable only when the State seeks to give preferential treatment in the matter of employment to the backward class.

“The basis for providing reservation for PWD is physical disability and not any of the criteria forbidden under Article 16(1) such as caste, religion etc. The objective behind the 1995 Act is to integrate PWD into the society and to ensure their economic progress... PWD are not and cannot be equated with backward classes contemplated under Article 16(4),” it said. Article 16 empowers the state to prescribe preferential treatment to certain classes in matters of public employment.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 1, 2016

NITI Aayog's new framework: Official talks with states, Centre in July

The third governing council meeting is also likely to take stock of the decisions taken in the first two meetings that happened last year.

Written by Pranav Mukul

The second governing council meeting took place in July 2015.

The change in the planning process brought in by Niti Aayog, as per which it will prepare a 15-year vision document, seven-year strategy paper and three-year action plan, is expected to witness its first official discussion with states and the Centre in July when the third meeting of the think tank's governing council is slated to happen, according to official sources.

The high-level meeting, headed by Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#), will not only appraise the potentialities of the new planning process in presence of state chief ministers, but would also take stock of initiatives taken by Niti Aayog in the last one year. The second governing council meeting took place in July 2015.

According to one of the sources cited above, the Niti Aayog's vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya, at the meeting, will make a presentation on the approach taken by the institution in preparation of the three aforementioned plan documents.

With an aim to build consensus with states on the Centre's land-leasing policy, in June the Niti Aayog had set up a special cell on land policy, headed by former head of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices T Haque, who also led the panel that recommended the land-leasing laws to Niti Aayog.

The third governing council meeting is also likely to take stock of the decisions taken in the first two meetings that happened last year. To this effect, reports will be submitted by sub-groups of chief ministers that were formed for Swachh Bharat Mission, Skill Development, and rationalisation of centrally sponsored schemes.

DECCAN HERALD, JUL 4, 2016

25 years of reforms; speed it up again

The 25th anniversary of the launch of economic reforms on July 1, 1991 has provided an opportunity for an assessment of the record of the reforms and a view of the challenges lying ahead. It is well accepted that the policies and decisions which started on that day with the devaluation of the rupee changed the country's economy beyond recognition. In the next few days and weeks, a blitz of measures like the lifting of import controls, ending of the licence permit raj, removal of curbs on foreign investment, lowering of taxes and cut in customs duties, removal of wealth tax, introduction of VAT, the dismantling of public sector monopoly in some areas and an overhaul of the stock market system opened up the economy. The entire liberalisation programme may have been forced upon the country as there was a crisis with the country mortgaging its gold abroad and having only foreign exchange needed for a few days of import.

The crisis was turned into an opportunity. Then prime minister Narasimha Rao and finance minister Manmohan Singh led the country through the reforms for the next five years and laid the foundation for a strong and open economy. The reforms enabled the country to move up from the 10th largest economy in the world to the third largest now. The exchange reserves have increased over 300 times, the GDP has multiplied over six times and the number of people below the poverty line halved. The private sector, which was afraid of competition, has thrived and gained confidence. The liberalisation programme unleashed latent energies and the unrecognised potential of the economy. It helped the country to withstand tumults like the 2008 global meltdown. Many of the sceptics and opponents of reforms, who ranged from sections in the ruling party to the opposition, have had to accept since then the need for and the relevance of the programme. That is why the programme has continued through successive governments in the next two decades.

But the implementation of the programme has not been consistent and the pace has varied. It lagged even during the time of the UPA II government. Politics has often played foul, as seen by the BJP's opposition to the GST legislation when the UPA was in power and the obstruction by the Congress now. As Manmohan Singh has said, when the crisis is over, the country becomes

complacent. There is the need to expand and speed up the reforms again and national interest demands that the best plans for future are not stymied by narrow politics. The government should also ensure that the environment is right for reforms.

EDUCATION

HINDU, JUL 5, 2016

Teachers divided over DUTA protest against UGC notification

: Over a month after members of the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) boycotted the evaluation of undergraduate examinations, a section of teachers have opposed the move.

DUTA teachers have been boycotting the evaluation process since May 24 in protest against the new University Grants Commission (UGC) norms to ascertain their academic performance. They argue that the notification will lead to job cuts to the tune of 50 per cent and drastically decrease pupil to teacher ratio in higher education.

Admission process

The boycott was later extended to Delhi University's undergraduate admission process as well. However, a section of teachers opposed the move saying it may jeopardise the career of students.

"The teachers noticed that the career of many students was in jeopardy due to the continuing evaluation boycott and that students are making desperate calls to their teachers to know about developments in this regard. We express dismay and displeasure over the manner in which the teachers' strike is continuing without paying heed to the difficulties students and parents are facing due to the dissociation call by DUTA. An admission boycott call can in no way be justified," said a statement from a group of 200 faculty members.

Terming the boycott as "unethical" mode of protest and fearing delay in results, the students had urged the teachers to end the protest. Following this, the faculty members decided to end the boycott for final-year students. However, the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) claimed that teachers have not started evaluating the papers so far.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), along with students and DUSU members, on Monday took out a "Save DU Rally" against the boycott.

"Why should the students suffer in 2016 because of a wrong policy brought in by the Congress government in 2008? Why do these teachers want to sacrifice the future of DU students in their tussle with the UGC?" said a protesting student.

March

Meanwhile, DUTA members marched along Bahadurshah Zafar Marg to reach the UGC Office to press for their demands.

Teachers from prominent colleges like Lady Shri Ram College, Miranda House and Gargi College were a part of the protest. They maintained that the UGC was still not receptive to their

demand of rolling back the Academic Performance Indicator (API) required for promotions. They added that they will not get back to evaluation till that is done.

DUTA members have been boycotting the evaluation of undergraduate exams since May 24

DECCAN HERALD, JUL 4, 2016

UGC adds new rules, redefines ragging

Prakash Kumar

In order to curb ragging in higher educational institutions, the University Grants Commission (UGC) recently amended its regulations. The UGC expanded its regulations to include all categories of students.

Now, any act of physical or mental abuse based on colour, race, gender and even appearance of a student will be construed as ragging, and those found guilty of such misconduct will be liable for disciplinary and penal action.

The amendments, based on recommendations of a government-appointed committee, was notified in an official gazette on Wednesday, with the new provisions coming into effect immediately.

Transgender students have also been included in the list of those vulnerable to campus ragging. The higher education regulator said students cannot be put to physical or mental abuse for their sexual orientation. With frequent reports about African nationals facing discrimination, the UGC has stipulated that any act of physical and mental abuse on the lines of nationality will also be construed as ragging.

The commission said bullying and exclusion of students, whether freshers or otherwise, will also be termed ragging.

Students cannot be troubled or harassed by any means or methods by others in the university and college campuses for their appearance, regional origins, linguistic identity, place of birth, place of residence or economic background.

In 2009, the UGC framed a comprehensive regulation for curbing the menace in higher educational institutions following a Supreme Court verdict. To make it more effective, it was amended in 2012.

“In the third amendment, we have brought in many newer categories to expand the scope of the regulations to cover all students,” a UGC official told DH.

The UGC has received 184 complaints of ragging, with the highest 30 from Uttar Pradesh. Karnataka recorded 8 cases of ragging this year.

Now, what is ragging?

Any act of physical/mental abuse based on colour, race, gender, appearance, sexual orientation, nationality of a student Bullying and excluding students, whether freshers or otherwise Troubling or harassing by any means or methods for their regional origins, linguistic identity, place of birth/residence or economic background

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JUL 4, 2016

What UGC's reforms agenda must focus on

While the ongoing reforms are welcome, the UGC must also focus on providing more scholarships to women, and financial support through higher non-NET scholarships to help older scholars

By: [Akash Sinha](#)

The UGC has amended regulations regarding the Academic Performance Index (API)—a mandatory requirement for universities and colleges to select and promote faculty members.

For decades, students and academicians have been demanding reforms both in the functioning of the higher education regulatory body, the University Grants Commission (UGC), and higher education in general. A number of new initiatives have been announced by the UGC.

Among other things, the granting of deemed university status will be made easier. Then there are new regulations for deemed universities, according to which there will be no bar on the number of off-campus centres such institutions may set up, even as quality has to be assured. Student-specific reforms include increase in the period of maternity leaves for PhD scholars. Also, foreign-university collaboration has been made simpler for colleges and universities.

G Viswanathan, president, Education Promotion Society for India, and chancellor, VIT, Vellore, is of the opinion that some salient decisions like bringing total transparency and objectivity in the sanctioning process for new institutions would bring about a complete change in the mindset of regulatory agencies under the domain of HRD ministry. "The time-frame for academic experts to

submit their reports and to completely videograph their inspections and upload the same on the UGC website within 24 hours is going to be a big relief for the private sector,” he said.

Further, the UGC has amended regulations regarding the Academic Performance Index (API)—a mandatory requirement for universities and colleges to select and promote faculty members. API has been a controversial topic since 2010, and recently faculty at Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, among others, protested against a regulation which increased the number of teaching hours under API. Following the protests, the HRD ministry rolled back the regulation but kept a clause in which students with 75% and above attendance will have a say in teachers’ appraisals. On the protests, Prashant Bhalla, president, Manav Rachna Educational Institutions, said, “In this case, faculty members were less than professionally prudent in blatantly opposing increase in contact hours. It gave an impression to the student community and general public that the teachers were shying away from their duty. They could have explained about their research obligations and the need for preparation work—which can be a time-consuming process—in a more cogent and acceptable manner.”

Another welcome step is increasing the period of maternity leaves for PhD scholars from 180 days to 240 days. Surinder Jaswal, deputy director, Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, said that TISS has always upheld the vision of supporting women in pursuing higher education. “UGC’s move to provide a 240-day maternity break would definitely encourage more women to pursue and complete higher education and research,” Jaswal said. On the proposed step towards legalising PhD programmes in distance mode so as to enable more working people to pursue research, Jaswal added, “Yes, if it is modified to meet the requirements of working scholars through a blended mode, why not? While course work and paper writing must be mandated, other components can be completed long distance.”

At the same time, there are several areas where the UGC still needs to focus. Jaswal believes that providing more scholarships, particularly to women, and financial support through higher non-NET scholarships to help older scholars is needed. “More infrastructural support such as hostels, library and grants for attending and presenting in conferences and seminars for doctoral scholars as well as financial support to young faculty to undertake research and research dissemination are some areas where the UGC needs to work,” added Jaswal.

Clearly, even as the HRD ministry’s efforts signal a better future for India—the New Education Policy is also on the anvil—regulatory bodies, including the UGC and the AICTE, must work as true enablers of such initiatives.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

Don’t tamper with AMU’s minority status

Omar Peerzada

The way Aligarh participates in various walks of national life will determine the place of Muslims in India’s national life. The way India conducts itself towards Aligarh will determine largely, the form which our national life will acquire ...,” said Zakir Hussain when he was vice-chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

Looking at Hussain’s reference to the link between AMU and the Muslim community, we should take a look at the history of the institution, which is dotted with controversies and legal complexities.

The university came under a malicious attack in 1965 as mullahs were opposed to Muslims going for modern education; it is in trouble again under the NDA government.

In January, attorney general Mukul Rohatgi told a Supreme Court bench that “it is the stand of the Union of India that AMU is not a minority university. As the executive government at the Centre, we cannot be seen as setting up a minority institution in a secular state”.

This, as AG Noorani had pointed out, was a reversal of the stand taken by the UPA government.

Noorani recalled that “in India itself, curiously, whenever it suited the government to do so it never failed to refer to Aligarh with pride as a flourishing Muslim institution”. A pamphlet --- Muslims in India ----- published by the ministry of information and broadcasting in 1964 referred to Aligarh as “the oldest Muslim educational institution in India. It was founded by the late Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in 1875 as the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College. It was in 1920 that it formally became a central university after the enactment of the Aligarh Muslim University Act in that year”.

There is a crucial difference between establishing a university and incorporating or upgrading an existing functional institution to the level of a university.

In the Azeez Basha vs Union of India case, the SC’s Constitution bench had ruled that AMU was not established by Muslims, but by an Act of Parliament and hence did not merit to be seen in the ambit of Article 30 of the Constitution, which gives the right to minority communities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

The upgrade of MAO College to AMU was a legal requirement. The word ‘Muslim’ was included in AMU as an acknowledgement that the government of the day accepted the university as an institution of Muslims, established to promote the educational and cultural advancement of Muslims, making it a minority institution.

The government must not touch the AMU’s minority status. If it changes the status, it would go against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s policy of ‘Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas’.

The Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia are institutions of scientific learning. The government must ensure peaceful functioning of the minority institutions, and use Article 29 and Article 30(1) to grant minority tag to more such institutions.

Omar Peerzada is former member, National Monitoring Committee for Minority Education, HRD ministry

The views expressed are personal

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

HINDU, JUL 5, 2016

Harmonising RTE with minority schools

AJEY SANGAI

On June 10, the Kerala High Court, in a remarkable verdict, ruled that Section 16 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act), that mandates schools to not detain any child before s/he completes elementary education, is applicable to minority educational institutions as well (*Sobha George v. State of Kerala*). The Supreme Court had exempted minority schools from the purview of the RTE Act in *Pramati Education and Cultural Trust v. Union of India* (2014). The High Court located this obligation not in the Act but under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees right to life and liberty. It ruled that no-detention policy (NDP) is in the “best interest” of the child and could independently be considered a fundamental right. How does this judgment redraw the lines of engagement between minority rights and rights to education? While this judgment is indeed innovative, is it necessarily good?

RTE Act and minority rights

Article 21A recognises the right of all children aged between 6 and 14 to free and compulsory elementary education. The RTE Act operationalises this right by elucidating supporting rights, identifying the duty-bearers and establishing administrative structures to enforce these rights. The generic scope of right to education seems to conflict with the specific contexts of the rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice under Article 30. That right, however, is not absolute. Freedom to ‘administer’ a school cannot include ‘mal-administering’ it. Regulations for maintaining academic standards, ensuring proper infrastructure, health and sanitation, etc. could be imposed on minority schools as well. Further, a government-aided minority school cannot discriminate against students on grounds of religion, race, caste, language in the matters of their admission (Article 29(2)).

The *Pramati* judgment was erroneous on two counts. First, it failed to notice that besides the 25 per cent quota in Section 12(1)(c), the RTE Act also has provisions on infrastructural norms, pupil-teacher ratio, prohibition on screening tests and capitation fee and ban on corporal punishment. Far from annihilating the ‘minority character’, these provisions benefit both the students and community. Second, it did not consider the fact that the government-aided minority schools stand on a different footing from their unaided counterparts and are more amenable to regulations than the latter.

Earlier, the Karnataka High Court refused to apply NDP to minority schools as it rightly considered itself bound by *Pramati* judgment. Interestingly, the Kerala High Court, while it began with the same premise, ended up with the opposite result! The significance of the *Sobha George* verdict, therefore, lies not only in making certain provision of the RTE Act applicable to

minority schools but the strategy employed for this. The courts reasons: "... RTE Act has no application in a minority school, whether aided or unaided. However, the Court has to examine whether Section 16 of RTE Act is a mere statutory right or can be treated as a fundamental right expressed in the form of statutory provision."

A key takeaway from this judgment is the recognition that certain provisions of the RTE Act have a universal appeal, even if the Act lacks it. However, it is completely within judicial discretion to determine which provisions are these. Prior to *Pramati*, courts had consistently upheld those regulations that do not annihilate their 'minority character' of the school and would actually serve the interests of students and community. As the RTE Act and rules incorporated a substantial part of these regulations, the *Pramati* judgment practically forecloses this line of reasoning.

A question of a clear law

While the *Sobha George* judgment opens possibilities of applying different provisions of the RTE Act on minority schools through the Article 21 route, it simultaneously forces a rethink on the role of judicial precedents. In the contrasting judgments of two High Courts on the same issue while ostensibly paying allegiance to the same Supreme Court precedent, one could notice a snowballing effect. This makes the overall position of law unclear arising from an erroneous opinion by the highest court. Besides fairness, certainty and stability are essential values underpinning the rule of law. In Common Law, a lower or a latter court cannot displace the judgment given by a higher or a prior court merely because it has a different perspective. This is what makes that judgment 'binding'. While a lower court may distinguish its case from the higher court on material facts, the latter judge could do that, or if there are compelling reasons, overrule the prior judgment of the same court. The question here is not only about NDP. A number of studies have documented the effects of detention on the psyche of young children. The issue is the obligation of the superior court in laying down a clear binding law for all subordinate courts. The *Sobha George* case may immediately benefit thousands of children in Kerala, yet conflicting judgments adversely affect realisation of rights of all children equally. A 'constitutionally-permissible balance' between right to education and minority rights requires an interpretation that makes them mutually reinforcing rather than irreconcilable. It is hoped that Supreme Court: (i) re-examines the positive (establishing and administering educational institutions for the welfare of minorities) and the negative (protection against imposition of majority language or culture) aspects of educational rights of minorities; and (ii) appreciates the special case for guaranteeing right to elementary education universally and equitably.

The problem with a judgment like *Pramati* is that for the issues it addresses, it either can overstay or is overruled.

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The Sobha George judgment may help children but it also forces a rethink on the role of legal precedents

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUL 1, 2016

Govt goes soft on student unions, says they strengthen democracy

Neelam Pandey

Campus politics is here to stay.

The government seems to have gone back on a plan to restrict student groups and free speech on college and university campuses, shows a document released by the HRD Ministry on Wednesday for public feedback.

The document called 'some inputs for draft national education policy 2016' says the human resource development ministry "encourage(s) the positive role played by students' union", an about turn on TSR Subramanian panel's suggestion for a ban on student groups explicitly based on caste, religion or any political party.

The government came in for all-round criticism over some of the recommendations of the Subramanian panel, which was set up in 2015 to overhaul education system, from school to university, in first such attempt in almost 30 years.

Though the report has not been released, over the last few weeks its content has been made public and is available online.

Subramanian, a former cabinet secretary, said in the report the committee had consulted senior advocate who had pointed out "prohibiting such activities within the campuses – or within a radius thereof – will be considered as reasonable".

But, the government has taken a much lenient view. The draft says the government will encourage the positive role played by students' unions in furthering the interests of democracy "and strengthening the democratic systems, governance and processes as well as debates, discussions and pluralism of thoughts".

Almost all political parties have a campus presence. Some of them have student wings while others are more discreet in their support.

The government, however, has hinted at measure to discourage students from overstaying on campuses. The Subramanian panel is in favour of restricting the time students can stay in university hostels or remain enrolled in a course after complaints that many pupils at leading institutes took years to graduate.

The Hyderabad suicide of [Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula](#) that triggered nation-wide protests seems to have a bearing on the draft as well. All institutions will put in place an “effective grievance redressal mechanism” and follow the principles of natural justice before taking any punitive action against any student, faculty or organisation, it says.

The Subramanian panel report didn’t make such a suggestion. Vemula hanged himself on January 17 alleging caste discrimination.

The panel had cited the Supreme Court to back curbs on student groups, saying the court had accepted a number of recommendations “which inter-alia correspond to curbing the activities of student unions etc., which could potentially disrupt the academic atmosphere”.

The ministry has started the process of consulting states over the draft while public has been asked to email their suggestions by July 31.

The ministry, sources said, was miffed with Subramanian after he wrote a letter to minister Smriti Irani, asking her to make the report public.

EMINENT PERSONALITIES

STATESMAN, JUL 4, 2016

The controversial guest - I

Arun Kumar Banerji

When Tagore first visited China in 1924, he was at the peak of his fame, having won the Nobel prize in literature in 1913. Wherever he went to speak, from Japan to Argentina, he had packed lecture halls where people were eager to listen to him as he was the lone voice from Asia in a world that was almost entirely dominated by western thinkers and institutions. Tagore was invited to visit Japan in 1913; but he was reluctant to go as he was saddened by the untimely death of his friend Okakura who had visited India in 1902 and stayed with the Tagore family in Calcutta. However, he visited Japan in 1916, and delivered lectures in Osaka and Tokyo Universities. His host in Japan was the prestigious Asahi Shimbun that gave extensive coverage to his visit and even published the text of his lectures in Japanese. During his stay from May to August, he was almost a household name and people thronged to greet him when he arrived in Kobe to make a presentation at Osaka University. He had a similar experience in Tokyo railway station. He was so highly respected that his lecture hall in Tokyo Imperial University was full long before the scheduled time for the lecture.

His experience in China was, however, different. He reached Shanghai on 12 April, 1924 for a lecture tour arranged by one of China's leading intellectuals, Liang Qichao. But within a few days after his arrival he had to face hecklers shouting 'Go back, slave from a lost country'. How could one explain such behaviour on the part of the Chinese? Historically India and China had links stretching over several centuries and India's Buddhism had a great influence on China. The Buddhist monks Faxian (Fa hsien) and Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang), had great admiration for Buddhism and travelled to India to study the same. Xuanzang had studied at Nalanda for five years, besides travelling extensively to various parts of the country. He was also a keen observer of the social, cultural, political and economic conditions in India and after returning to China gave an incisive account of Harshavardhan's reign in his memoirs.

But when Tagore went to China in 1924, India was a colony. As Pankaj Mishra has pointed out in his essay on Tagore's unkind reception in China, 'A Poet Unwelcome' (Outlook, August 13, 2012), deep down in their hearts, the Chinese considered India as a 'lost country'. Internally weak, it fell easily to the foreign invaders. First, it was ruled by the Muslims and then by the Westerners, especially the British as there was no native ruling class capable of unifying the country against the invaders. As a result of the long years of foreign domination, the Chinese believed, the Indians suffered moral and psychological degradation and seemed to be dangerously out of touch with their own cultural heritage as Indian philosophy and literature,

largely written in Sanskrit , were not accessible to the vast majority of Indians. It was the translations of these texts by the Germans and the English that had made them available to a new generation of Western-educated Indian intellectuals and made them aware of the country's rich cultural heritage.

What was even worse, the British imperialists had used Indian soldiers in China in their battles against the Chinese for nearly a century after the first opium war of 1841. Indian soldiers (mostly Sikhs and Muslims) helped the British in their annexation of Hong Kong and in subsequent years more Muslim soldiers were recruited from Punjab to man the British garrisons in Hong Kong and Singapore. It is not surprising, therefore, that to an average Chinese, the Indians -- particularly, the Parsis from Bombay who acted as middlemen in the British opium trade with China, and the soldiers who served under the British and often got involved in clashes with the Chinese in the treaty ports of Hong Kong, Shanghai and Hankou -- became the symbols of the worst features of British imperialism. Therefore, in the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, the Chinese had developed a disdainful attitude towards India and the Indians who were used by the British to fight the imperialist wars.

For Liang and his peers feared that China might face a similar situation as there was yet to emerge a sense of national solidarity, which was the basis of European power and prosperity. During his visit to China, Tagore expressed his doubts about the suitability of the ideas of modern Western civilisation for the Asians, as it was rooted in money and power; he urged his fellow Asians not to abandon their traditional culture. But to the Chinese, his views seemed to be hollow. Novelist Mao Dun, who had once translated Tagore's works into Chinese and later became a bitter Communist radical, criticised Tagore for his views as they might have an adverse effect on the Chinese youth. "We are determined", he said, "not to welcome Tagore who loudly sings the praise of the eastern civilisation. Oppressed as we are by the militarists from within the country and by the imperialists from without, this is no time for dreaming." (Quoted in Pankaj Mishra's book, A Poet Unwelcome). The Chinese of Mao Dun's generation were more interested in the development of the sense of national solidarity, which had developed in the West; they had no respect for Tagore's ideas upholding the innate values of the eastern civilisation.

There were, however, some exceptions. Liang's mentor, Kang Youwei, was an admirer of Indian philosophy and literature, but he was criticised for this by thinkers who were younger than Liang and had participated in the May 14 movement (1919). Even Zhang Taiyan, who later became a distinguished scholar of Buddhism was quite critical of Kang for his praise of Indian philosophy and literature. According to Zhang, Indians were not bothered if their national territory was lost or if their race declined; but the Chinese, Zhang wrote, had a strong determination and because of this their accomplishments would surpass those of the Indians.

The somewhat cold reception that greeted Tagore in 1924 can thus be attributed to two factors -- the Chinese view of India as a 'lost country' and as a visible face of British imperialism; and Tagore's exhortation to Asians to uphold their traditional cultures , and his neglect of the sense of 'national solidarity' which was the basis of European power and prosperity. In subsequent years, other reasons have also been cited. In an article published in 1983 Ji Xianlin, the then Director of the Institute for the Study of South Asia , argued that the hosts were political 'reactionaries' who wanted to make use of Tagore to enhance their own political image. The other reason, in his reckoning, was that while the poet was an anti-imperialist and a patriot, he was also a mystic who made his ideas somewhat difficult to understand.

On the other hand, the American scholar Stephen Hey, who has done substantial research on Tagore's visit to China, in his book titled Asian Ideas of East and West (1970) has held the poet responsible for the 'failure' of his visit. In his opinion, Tagore was inspired by the idea of playing the role of a prophet, and wanted to preach the ideal of 'One Asia'. He upheld the cause of spiritualism over materialism; but his idea of spiritual rejuvenation was rejected by the young and the old alike. (Sisir Kumar Das; The Controversial Guest :Tagore in China, 1998). It was Tagore's views on nationalism that rattled the radical Chinese considerably as they were pining for a feeling of 'national solidarity' among the Chinese. They criticized the poet's views as he represented a country that was a colony; whether he would have been criticised in the same way had he been the citizen of an independent country remains debatable.

(To be concluded)

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STATESMAN, JUL 4, 2016

The controversial guest - II

Arun Kumar Banerji

It is significant that during 1915-16, when Tagore delivered his addresses against nationalism in the USA and Japan, a section of the intelligentsia in these countries were quite critical of him. As Debojyoti Bandyopadhyaya has pointed out in his recent study of Tagore's concept of Deshaprem (Patriotism), after Tagore had delivered his lectures criticising nationalism on 17 August 1916, the Japanese weekly, Chronicle, published an unsigned article 'Tagore and his critics' in which the author wrote: "Tagore's contempt for nationalism is naturally the bitterest pill for the Japanese to swallow. How can they put nationalism behind them? Surely such a doctrine can only be preached by a man whose country has lost its independence -- by an inhabitant of a pale and decaying land, where all things droop to ruin". (Rabindranather Jatiota -- Birodhi Deshaprem, August,2015, p.65). Tagore's early enthusiasm about Japan , expressed

after the victory of the Japanese in the Russo-Japanese war (1905) , ultimately gave way to pessimism as he feared the emergence of an aggressive and militarist Japan, and he expressed his apprehensions in a letter to C.F. Andrews in June, 1915. Although he had visited Japan twice after his first visit -- in 1924 and 1929 -- and even tried to develop an understanding with those Japanese intellectuals who, he thought , were against militarism, his ideas were shattered by the Japanese attack on Nanking. There followed sharp differences between Tagore and Noguchi who was invited to India and was treated as a national guest all over the country. The contemptuous attitude of a section of the Chinese communist leaders towards the Indians continued till the middle of the last century. After India attained independence, Chinese leaders were often critical of Nehru and his policies as he was viewed as an agent of Anglo-American imperialism, and this was despite the fact that India was one of the first countries, apart from the Communist states, to have recognised the new Communist government in China and pleaded with the West to accord to the People's Republic of China its rightful place in the United Nations.

The scenario changed in subsequent years, and during the 1950's, especially after the signing of the India-China Agreement over Tibet (1954), there was a marked improvement in India-China relations. But such hopes were illusory, as differences over the boundary question, the Tibetan issue and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, as well as the frequent border skirmishes led to a sharp deterioration in India-China relations by the end of the 1950s, eventually leading to the war of 1962. All this contributed to the development of a negative perception in both India and China. The war had exposed India's military weaknesses, and as the country tried to re-build its defence forces with British and American aid, and assistance from the Soviet Union, the Chinese accused New Delhi of colluding with these states for the containment of Beijing. The latter turned to Pakistan and ultimately emerged as that country's all-weather friend.

Developments during the 1960s, therefore, certainly were not conducive to the development of favourable perceptions at the mutual level, specifically of India in China, or for that matter, of China in India. Although some improvement in bilateral relations had taken place in the post-Mao years, the real breakthrough came after Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union called for a re-orientation of India's foreign policy, by jettisoning the ideological baggage of the Nehru era. This was followed by the liberalisation of the economy during the 1990s and an acceleration in the rate of its growth. This created a huge Indian market for prospective foreign exporters and investors. India's military strength was also beefed up, notably by the acquisition of nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles. A combination of these factors led to an improvement in India's international standing. India-China relations also improved rapidly during the last decade of the 20th century and despite occasional setbacks, relations have been fairly friendly, with both sides trying to widen their areas of cooperation and minimise the possibilities of conflict along the border. There has

also been an improvement in border management, pending final resolution of the dispute. Furthermore, India-China relations in the 21st century have expanded beyond the contours of traditional ties; they are multi-dimensional and multi-layered, marked by cooperation, discord and competition for influence in Asia and other parts of the world. By 2008, China replaced the US as India's largest trading partner; there has been an increase in mutual consultations, at the highest level, on a range of issues -- bilateral, regional and multi-lateral -- and exchange of visits by the military top brass, besides visits by scholars, businessmen and others. There have also been joint naval exercises.

There is no reason to believe that these developments have led to a resolution of all India-China disputes; but they have certainly contributed to a change in Chinese perceptions of India. The process really began in the opening years of this century. In an article published in The People's Daily on 6 September 2001, titled 'India Needs to Eliminate Fear over China', it was argued that since India had in its possession some 30-60 nuclear weapons and had raw materials for producing 70 nuclear bombs by 2005, as well as the Agni-II, which would soon have a range of 2500 kms, India had nothing to fear from China, and called for a change in the mindset of Indians for development of cooperation with China. Chinese experts recognised the important role India could play in maintaining peace in the maritime thoroughfares linking the Pacific in the East with the Atlantic in the West. Chinese foreign policy elites were also aware of India's economic strength which was reflected in the statements made by Prime Minister Zhu Ronji during his visit to India in January 2002.

It is in the context of these developments that one has to look at the controversies that had erupted in China over the translation of Rabindranath Tagore's classic, Stray Birds by the Chinese author Feng Tang, published in July 2015. This was not the first time that a Tagore work had been translated into Chinese. In fact, there have been several translations of the book, the most popular being Zheng Zheduo's 1922 version. Tang's translation was severely criticised in China. Columnist Raymond Zhou wrote in his column 'Lust in Translation' in the state-run China Daily. 'There is a fine line between imprinting creative works with a unique personality and screaming for attention. Feng just crossed it when he translated Tagore's tranquil verse into a vulgar selfie of hormone-saturated innuendo.' Rabindranath Tagore, he wrote, 'is Asia's foremost literary titan and very much beloved in China.' Tagore had inspired a number of Chinese scholars to learn Bengali and English to translate his work .

Tagore's Stray Birds has been featured in the reading list of books of school children. In a rare response to readers, particularly to the views of the parents, the publishers temporarily took it off the shelf in December 2015, pending a final review, although that decision itself came in for criticism of the net-users who thought that the choice for buying a particular translation of the

book should be left to the readers. The controversy over the translation of Tagore's book in China marked the revival of interest in India and its literary and cultural icons. It is also revealing that according to a survey conducted in 2009, Nehru and Tagore featured in the list of 50 foreigners who are supposed to have contributed to China's modern development. Had Tagore been alive today, he would have been happy to note that his legacy still survives in China that now looks upon India as a vibrant economic power with considerable international clout so much so that even the US and Japan, where Tagore was once criticised for his views on nationalism now are ready to be India's partners in its quest for development and security.

(Concluded)

EUROPEAN UNION

HINDU, JUL 5, 2016

A Brexit from economic wisdom

BHASKAR DUTTA

The ‘leave EU’ vote goes against basic economic judgment and was mounted on a campaign stirring up xenophobic hysteria. As its economy takes a hit, the U.K. can expect no favours from the EU

Not so long ago, virtually everyone seemed confident that a sizeable majority of British voters would reaffirm their faith and confidence in a united Europe. Unfortunately, what was considered to be a remote possibility has actually become a very grim reality. A small majority of voters have opted to take Britain out of the European Union (EU) in the referendum held on June 23. Brexit — the term coined to denote the exit of Britain from the EU — has won the day.

The buck stops here

No one has or will come out of this with any credit. First, British Prime Minister David Cameron showed extraordinarily poor political acumen by agreeing to the referendum without additional safeguards favouring the status quo. For instance, he could have attached riders, stipulating that Britain would go out of the EU only if a majority of eligible voters or a supermajority — say 60 per cent — of actual voters, opted for this. As it is, the electoral turnout was about 70 per cent and so roughly 35 per cent of Britain’s voting public took one of its most momentous decisions. Second, Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, hemmed and hawed his way through the pre-referendum campaign, and has to bear a sizeable share of the blame for not being able to inspire Labour voters to vote against Brexit.

Finally, the pro-Brexit leaders ran a most scurrilous campaign. They often made statements which had only a remote connection to ground realities, and made promises they had either no wish or power to implement. Perhaps the saddest aspect has been the blatantly xenophobic hysteria stirred up during the campaign. The pro-Leave camp claimed that Britain needed to quit the EU to close its borders to more EU migrants since the country had reached a “breaking point”. Pre- and post-election polling suggests that this was the pro-Leave argument that most resonated with British citizens, and was in large part responsible for Leave’s victory. Not surprisingly, several instances of racism have been reported after June 23.

Instead of crowing over their stunning victory, the leaders in the Eurosceptic faction of the Conservative Party have almost disappeared from the media. Perhaps, they have now realised the enormity of their blunder. What is surprising is that it took them so long to come to their senses. After all, virtually every well-known economist, including 10 Nobel laureates in Economics, opposed Brexit and issued several statements pointing out that the British economy would go into a tailspin if the Leave campaign won the day. But the leaders of the Leave movement

brushed aside these dire warnings. In a statement that will probably hound and haunt him for the rest of his political life, the Justice Secretary Michael Gove, who, along with the flamboyant ex-mayor of London Boris Johnson, was the public face of the Conservative Eurosceptic camp, contemptuously brushed aside all these warnings remarking that “People in this country have had enough of experts”.

Economy in a tailspin

Economists often make mistakes, perhaps the most famous being the failure to predict the U.S. housing boom bust and its effects on the global economy. But, this time round, they seem to have got it right. As I write this, the economic scenario in Britain is, if anything, gloomier than that painted by the economists who advised against the divorce from the EU. The pound has sunk to its lowest value in 31 years against the U.S. dollar. The devaluation of the pound will mean that imported goods and services will be costlier for the British public. Trillions of dollars have been wiped off the global stock exchanges, with U.K. shares naturally taking most of the beating. Major agencies have downgraded Britain’s credit rating.

There are also fears of thousands of job losses particularly in the financial sector. Over time, London has become the hub of the financial network in Europe. An important reason explaining the growth of the U.K. financial sector has been the “European passport scheme” under which financial services firms located in one member state can carry out business activities in another member state without having to incur the additional costs that are normally associated with being a “foreign” entity. That huge advantage will be lost once Brexit is formalised. More generally, Britain will become a significantly less attractive destination for all foreign investors that have favoured the country because it is such a convenient gateway (partly because of the English language) to Europe. Now, negotiations with the U.K. and the EU will have to be separate. Since the EU market is so much larger than the U.K. market, major manufacturers may well move to Ireland since that is still a part of the EU. So, Dublin could replace London as the gateway to Europe for these foreign firms. All this suggests that the U.K. economy will take several years to get back to “business as usual” mode.

The British government seems in no hurry to initiate the divorce process. This must surely be a mistake as far as the economy is concerned. Entrepreneurs hate uncertainty, and must have put all their major investment decisions on hold to await the outcome of the referendum. Statements coming out of Brussels suggest that Britain will not be able to retain the advantages of a single market. The details about the level of tariffs that will be imposed on British goods and services will be known only after all trade negotiations are completed. Perhaps the only issue which is certain is that Britain will not get any favours from the EU since the EU will want to send out a message that it is costly to leave the Union!

The impact on India

What will be the impact of Brexit on the Indian economy? The immediate, short-term effect must be negative, with its severity depending on the extent to which the major economies in Europe are affected. If Brexit results in a sharp contraction in these economies, then their demand for Indian exports will shrink. These effects will smoothen out over time once the European economies recover. This process will be faster for those Indian companies which compete with British manufacturers in European markets since the British companies can no longer treat continental Europe as a “home market” in so far as import taxes are concerned.

Of course, the devaluation of the pound implies that imports will be costlier in Britain and this will be another source of decrease in imports over and above that caused by a shrinking economy. Since Britain is an important destination for Indian exporters, this will also have a non-negligible impact on Indian exports. Indian firms which use Britain as a base for their European operations will now experience an increase in trading costs since they will face increased tariff barriers once Britain formally leaves the EU.

Some commentators have interpreted the results of the referendum as a vote against globalisation, pointing out that an integrated Europe has failed to raise living standards in much of Europe. The Italian economy is apparently not much bigger than it was when the Euro was created, while the Greek economy has shrunk appreciably. In Britain itself, the austerity drive of the Tory government has slashed welfare budgets. But is this all due to globalisation itself or the wrong set of policies followed by member states in Europe?

One can argue this till the cows come home. But the post-referendum surveys show clearly that xenophobia was the dominant reason explaining the vote in favour of Brexit. This is surely reason enough to desist from giving any positive spin on the referendum.

Bhaskar Dutta is a Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Warwick, U.K.

Economists often make mistakes, the most famous being the failure to predict the U.S. housing boom bust... But, this time round, they seem to have got it right

LIBRARIES

HINDU, JUL 6, 2016

Toy libraries for SDMC primary school students

Toys that double as learning aids will soon be available for students of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation's schools in Lajpat Nagar to borrow and take home to play with.

Toy libraries or banks will be set up in the SDMC's primary schools in Lajpat Nagar with the help of donations from local market associations and traders. Inaugurating an SDMC boys' school in Dayanand Colony of Lajpat Nagar-IV on Tuesday, New Delhi MP Meenakshi Lekhi announced that toy banks will be commissioned in school with the support of toy-sellers in the local markets. A zonal education department official said toy libraries will also be set up in other SDMC schools.

Visit to Parliament

The students will also be taken on visits to Parliament. Ms. Lekhi offered her support to arrange the programme. Meanwhile, the three-floor building was constructed over a period of one year at a cost of Rs.3.06 crore. Spread over 1,809 sq m, the school has classrooms on all three floors and a hall on one of the floors.

HINDU, JUL 5, 2016

Kolkata National Library may get a centre in Delhi

SOUMYA DAS

The 113-year-old National Library here is to get its first regional branch. The regional centre is likely to come up in New Delhi.

Confirming the development, Director General (Additional Charge) of National Library Arun Kumar Chakraborty said initially only digitised version of books will be kept at the proposed centre. Currently, the sole campus of the National Library, under the Ministry of Culture, is located on a 30-acre land in south Kolkata.

"In the initial stages, it will be very difficult to keep hard copies of books in the proposed extension as full-fledged planning for the required infrastructure is yet to be done. Primarily, digital contents will be kept there," Mr. Chakraborty told *The Hindu* on Monday.

Maximum capacity

The proposed centre will have a maximum capacity of 25 users and will be equipped with 35 computers.

Mr. Chakraborty said the primary reason behind setting up such a facility is to expand the collection of recent publications at the National Library by collaborating with publishers. As the headquarters of most of the major publishers are located in New Delhi, it would be convenient to set up an “extension” of the National Library there, he said.

Pointing out that as per the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954 the National Library is supposed to get free copies of all the Indian publications, he said: “Due to our inadequate contacts with publishers, currently we do not get more than 30 to 40 per cent of the recent publications and so we are thinking of setting up an extension in New Delhi to resolve the issue.”

National Library authorities said readers and researchers outside West Bengal find it difficult to gain access to its resources.

“Readers in other States often complain that they do not get regular access to the National Library. Even for obtaining membership, they have to come to Kolkata. We should have offices in other places [outside Bengal] for this,” Mr. Chakraborty said.

Initially, only digitised versions of books are expected to be archived at the proposed facility

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

STATESMAN, JUL 6, 2016

Ministry-making for political ends

Arati R Jerath

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third cabinet exercise (the first was when he assumed office in May 2014 and the second happened six months later in November that year) contains two clear messages. One, politics and elections, not governance and performance, are at the top of the PM's mind as he nears the midway mark of his five year term. Two, BJP president Amit Shah has emerged as a key powerhouse in the current dispensation. It can be said that a ModiShah duopoly has replaced the Modi-Shah-Jaitley triumvirate that once ruled the roost.

The most unique aspect of the expansion was that Shah was the purveyor of good news to the new ministers, not the Prime Minister as is the convention. In the UPA government, which had two power centres, Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi would meet cabinet entrants together, he as PM and she as Congress president. While Modi observed convention on the last two occasions by calling his new colleagues one by one, this time he left the task to Shah. For the past two days, Shah's Akbar Road residence has seen a stream of visitors. They went in with their hearts in their mouths but came out beaming after being told that they were headed for the most coveted perk of politics, a ministerial berth.

What is significant is that Modi chose to let Shah perform the role that he should have. The decision exalts Shah to a status that no party president has held in any dispensation. It also gives him a toehold in matters of state although officially, he is in charge of organizational matters. It is quite clear that most of the new ministers were handpicked by Shah, based on caste and community, keeping in mind upcoming state polls and the big national one in 2019. Dalits, OBCs and tribals dominate the list of ministers. And with an eye on Gujarat which goes to polls at the end of 2017, Shah has picked two Patels as a sop to the agitating Patidar community. Time will tell whether the strategy of using a cabinet expansion to send a political message works on the ground or whether this too will turn out to be a jumla.

No Iftar

In a break with time-honoured tradition, the Congress party is not hosting an Iftar this Ramzan. Instead, it has decided to use the money that would have been spent on a lavish Iftar dinner to distribute rations to poor Muslim families. The sentiment is honourable. But the decision has set tongues wagging in Congress circles about the reason behind the cancellation. Many believe that

the party has developed cold feet about being seen as too pro-Muslim just before the UP assembly polls. It's the soft Hindutva line, say these sources, recalling that the party paid a heavy price in the 2012 polls for a campaign that was perceived as appeasing the minorities with talk of 18 per cent reservation for Muslims and Sonia Gandhi's tears over the Batla House encounter. Another section has a different explanation. They say that the party leadership is worried about thin attendance at the Iftar which would underline its growing political irrelevance and its increasing isolation. Even one dropout from among prominent Muslim leaders and opposition parties would give the BJP an opportunity to crow about the fading away of the Congress. Two years in the opposition and the recent poll defeats seem to have eroded the party's self-confidence. The scrapping of this year's Iftar dinner is just another sign of the gloomy mood in the Congress.

Goa squabbles

There are less than eight months to go for the assembly election in Goa but the local RSS and BJP units can't seem to stop fighting. The most recent incident saw RSS Goa chief Subhash Velingkar snub chief minister Laxmikant Parsekar in the most humiliating manner. Velingkar resigned from the committee that was formed to plan big bang celebrations for Parsekar's 60th birthday. He gave no reason for his sudden decision which has embarrassed the Goa CM no end. All he said was that his followers didn't approve of him joining a birthday bash committee. Velingkar's sudden exit has plunged the local BJP into turmoil. With elections coming up, the support of the RSS is critical. Instead, the RSS seems to have declared war on the BJP. One of the key issues of contention is the RSS demand to promote the Marathi language as the medium of instruction and stop government funding of Churchrun English medium schools.

Loose cannon

Subramanian Swamy once told a group of journalists that no one can control him. Even his father failed, he boasted. Well, his words are proving prophetic because even after Narendra Modi snubbed him in his recent TV interview, Swamy continues to post embarrassing tweets. The Modi-Amit Shah duo are known to inspire fear and awe in the BJP. Senior party leaders and ministers don't dare annoy them. One word, one gesture from either is enough. But Swamy is proving to be an exception. Is there a hidden hand guiding and protecting him? Or is he simply living up to his reputation as an out-of-control rebel?

TRIBUNE, JUL 1, 2016

Modi reviews team's work, rejig on cards

Changes likely in govt, BJP setup

- The PM reviewed progress made by different ministries in implementing the decisions taken by the Cabinet and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs
- The ministers were asked to give presentations on approvals granted and the status of various projects
- The expected reshuffle may see some “significant” changes in both the BJP setup and the government

Vibha Sharma

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today conducted a “comprehensive review” of the working of key ministries and status of schemes and infrastructure projects granted approval by the Cabinet in the past two years.

Though the meeting was a part of a quarterly exercise undertaken by the PM, the one held today assumed significance because of the buzz surrounding the expected Cabinet and party organisation reshuffle, which, sources said, could happen “any time soon now”.

According to those present at the meeting, it was a “purely business-like exercise” during which the PM reviewed the performance of all Union ministries. Top bureaucrats made PowerPoint presentations and there was no mention of the reshuffle during the meeting, they said.

Ministers were asked to give vision and outline of the intended projects during 2016-17 and how they would spend their allocated Budget. They were asked to provide the status of schemes sanctioned during the past two years. The PM, they said, asked ministers to ensure that the benefits of government schemes reached the common man. He said the schemes mentioned in the election manifesto should be implemented properly to ensure that the Opposition did not get any opportunity to accuse the government of falling short on promises.

BJP leaders in the know of developments, however, said the reshuffle was on the cards and “significant” changes could be expected in the party and the government where “performers will be rewarded”. Speculations that changes are now imminent have been doing the rounds since yesterday when the PM and BJP chief Amit Shah met for more than five hours. The buzz is that the portfolios of some senior ministers may be changed. “Performers” like ministers of state Piyush Goyal, Dharmendra Pradhan and Sanjeev Balyan can be promoted while some “non-performers” can be dropped.

PRIVATE SECTOR

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 1, 2016

Govt to increase maternity leave in private sector to 26 weeks

Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi Monday said the Ministry of Labour has agreed to increase maternity leave to six-and-a-half months.

The union government is set to increase the maternity leave for women employed in private firms from the existing 12 weeks to 26 weeks.

Women and Child Development Minister [Maneka Gandhi](#) Monday said the Ministry of Labour has agreed to increase maternity leave to six-and-a-half months. “We had written to the Labour Ministry asking that the maternity leave be extended taking into account the six months of breastfeeding that is required post childbirth. The Labour Ministry has agreed to increase it to six-and-a-half months,” said Maneka.

The Ministry of Labour is expected to amend the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, which presently entitles women to 12 weeks of maternity benefit whereby employers are liable to pay full wages for the period of leave.

Officials of the WCD Ministry said they will push for extending the leave to eight months, or 32 weeks, for women employed in both private and government sectors.

But WCD officials said the Labour Ministry has expressed reservations about increasing the maternity leave any further as they perceive that doing so will adversely affect the employability of women.

“The Labour Ministry has decided on six-and-a-half months following meetings with various stakeholders. We, however, feel that eight months of maternity leave — for women in government as well as private sectors — is required. We will move a note to the Cabinet

Secretariat in this regard. Six months of exclusive breastfeeding is very important to combat malnutrition, diarrhoea and other diseases in infants and to lower infant mortality rate,” said a WCD official.

The International Labour Organisation recommends a minimum standard maternity leave of 14 weeks or more, though it encourages member states to increase it to at least 18 weeks. At 26 weeks, India is set to join the league of 42 countries where maternity leave exceeds 18 weeks. It, however, falls behind several East European, Central Asian and Scandinavian countries, which have the most generous national legislation for paid maternity leave.

Women employed in government jobs in India get a six-month maternity leave as per the Central Civil Service (Leave) Rules 1972. The last circular in this regard was issued in 2008, when it was increased from four-and-a-half months. If the WCD Ministry’s recommendations to the Cabinet Secretariat are accepted, the Department of Personal & Training will have to issue orders to enhance it to eight months.

Moreover, women government employees are allowed to take childcare leave of up to two years in phases at any point till their child turns 18 years old. The Seventh Pay Commission recently recommended that only the first 365 days of leave should be granted with full pay, while the remaining 365 can be availed at 80 per cent of the salary. But Maneka recently petitioned Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#) against the proposal, terming it a regressive step at a time when women are trying to become more economically independent.

“Women in India need longer maternity leave in absence of any support in parenting from men. It should not be seen as a deduction in labour hours but as a long-term investment from the future economic point of view. This is in addition to the fact that women need long maternity leave to

recuperate and invest in child care,” said Ranjana Kumari, director of the Centre for Social Research.

She added that a recent analysis of the Maternity Benefit Act by CSR for the National Commission of Women showed that discrimination against pregnant women was widely prevalent in the corporate sector in the country.

TOURISM

DECCAN HERALD, JUL 1, 2016

Rashtrapati Bhavan now a tourist spot

The Rashtrapati Bhavan's main building, museums and gardens are being developed into a tourist circuit, with President Pranab Mukherjee's efforts to "demystify every aspect" of his official residence premises.

"The three new tourist circuits will be inaugurated on July 25. The visitors can see them singly or in combination," the President's office said in a statement on Thursday, after Secretary to the President, Omita Paul, held a meeting with 24 prominent tour operators to discuss ways to publicise the three upcoming tourist circuits within the Rashtrapati Bhavan premises.

Addressing the tour operators, Paul said the Rashtrapati Bhavan is looking forward to serve as a major tourist destination. She asked them to create greater awareness and attract visitors from both India and abroad.

"Since the beginning of the 13th Presidency in July 2012, the efforts of President Pranab Mukherjee have been to demystify every aspect of Rashtrapati Bhavan and bring it closer to the general public. It was important as many people as possible have the opportunity to view this great monument of living heritage," she said.

Visitors to the Rashtrapati Bhavan now have the convenience of booking and paying for their visits online. In addition to the Rashtrapati Bhavan building, two museum complexes and beautifully manicured gardens of Rashtrapati Bhavan will be added to the tourist circuits now, the President's office said.

WATER SUPPLY

STATESMAN, JUL 6, 2016

Drought & water woes-I

Jaydev Jana

From a chemical point of view, nothing could be simpler than water; only two atoms of hydrogen joined to one atom of oxygen. But from a human perspective, such simplicity fades away. More than 97 per cent of water is salty, 2 per cent is fresh water in the form of snow and ice, and only one per cent is left for humans. Water is a finite substance.

The quantum of freshwater on this planet has remained the same over millennia. Water cannot be created or destroyed; only its form changes though it can of course be polluted and made unusable. 'Water is life's matter, matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water.' (Albert Szent-Gyorgyi). Globally, it is also a major problem; more than one billion people live without clean water leading to a silent humanitarian crisis that kills around 3,900 children every day due to waterborne diseases. Water is not just the most undervalued resource; in the coming years it is likely to be the most contested resource.

Access to fresh water is hugely unequal an American uses 560 litres per day relative to 50 litres daily for an Indian. By 2015, the UN anticipated that two-thirds of the world's people will struggle to find water. Water access is projected to be one of the dominant factors in the global conflict during the current century.

In the words of Ismail Serageldin, 'The wars of the twentyfirst century will be fought over water.' Unbridled consumption of water across India, with insufficient ideas of how to fill a yawning demand-supply gap, is leading to an unprecedented crisis. Agriculture accounts for around three-quarters of all water that is used in India. Farmers grow commercial crops, from sugarcane to banana. They dig deeper and deeper into the ground to pump water for irrigation. Rapid urbanisation, lifestyle changes and a huge demand from commercial and industrial users have put tremendous stress on already fragile fresh water resources.

India has, at present, the annual potential of 1,123 billion cubic metres (BCM) of 'utilisable' water with 690 BCM coming from surface water resources and remaining 433 BCM from GW resources. It has been estimated by the Central Water Commission that the demand for water will rise from 634 BCM to 1,093 BCM in 2015 to 1,447 BCM of water by 2050. What is alarming is that, according to a World Resources Institute estimate, in 15 years, the national supply of water is expected to fall 50 per cent below demand. Moreover, the flow of, and access to water happens across several geographical and metaphorical divides, barriers and levels - rich and poor, corporate and private, one state and another. India is a groundwater civilisation, Ground water

(GW) or the Common-Pool Resources (CPR) is the backbone of the country's water security. It supplies around 70 per cent of all our water needs across agriculture, industry and domestic water.

There is no policy on GW. Neither is there a limit on what water-intensive crops can be grown with it. There is no concerted recharging of groundwater. State governments follow irrational water-pricing policies. As many as 30 million borewells pump out some 250 million cubic metres of GW annually.

The extraction of ground water (GW) at rates surpassing the nature's recharge capacity has resulted in rapidly falling water table across the country. As GW is often a source of supply for streams, springs, lakes and wetlands, the over-exploitation of the resource creates parched conditions and thus fosters recurrent droughts.

Overdrawing of GW causes depletion to an extent that can disrupt the water cycle. Drought in India is fairly chronic with fairly 68 per cent of the area deemed drought-prone. The risks cannot be minimised without tackling the serious problems of GW depletion. Moreover, an area considered to be safe in terms of quantitative availability of GW may not be safe in terms of its quality. According to some estimates, while there are some 65 to 70 million people drinking fluoridated water across Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, an estimated 15-20 million people are consuming water with significant traces of arsenic.

As more and more water is pumped out of limited reserves, experts think India is at the brink of full-blown water crisis. Rainfall is the main source of water in India. But back-to-back droughts resulting from consecutive monsoon failures caused by climate change are becoming a reality for India. The current drought is the fourth such calamity in the last 115 years. India faced consecutive double-digit rainfall deficit in 1965 and 1966, when more than one-third of the country received poor rain. But the crippling 2016 drought has plagued a richer and more water-guzzling India. This classless drought is indeed human-made. But it is not a deficit monsoon, rather the lack of policies and mechanisms to ensure drought-proof areas.

Governments took a short-term view of the problem. Problems relating to water supply would be exacerbated further with climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated in its Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) that the Himalayan glaciers would shrink by 45 per cent by 2100 if the average surface temperature of the earth rises by 1.8 degree Celsius. In case the temperature rises by 3.7 degree Celsius, the shrinkage would be 68 per cent.
(To be concluded)

STATESMAN, JUL 7, 2016

Drought & water woes - II

Jaydev Jana

The rapid melting of glaciers has led to the formation of a large number of glacial lakes, which discharge a large volume of water and debris downstream, causing what they call “lake-outburst floods”. The duration of rainfall is expected to be brief and erratic while the intensity of rain is set to rise, leading to floods.

Mahatma Gandhi once said: ‘Owing to our neglect and folly, the years’ rains are allowed to run down into the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.’ Water woes would be aggravated unless we do everything we can to augment water resource -- hold every drop of water, make running water walk, walking water crawl, and crawling water stand and finally use standing water for surface storage and recharging aquifers. Historically Indians have been the world’s greatest water harvesters. Harvesting of water and its management became an integral part of community life. Over centuries they have developed a range of techniques to harvest every possible form of water from rain water to GW, stream to river water and flood water to meet their year-round needs. The techniques are unique to the terrain and social practices. The most common are open water bodies such as ponds, tanks, small bund (called Johads in Rajasthan), chappris, chaals or talaais, that provide water for animals, irrigation and washing purposes. For human consumption, people preferred to harvest underground seepages in baoris or khattris (HP), naulas (Uttarakhand), or tap springs through dharas (Uttarakhand) or panihars / chharedus (HP). In the dry areas of Rajasthan, people built structures like step wells and wells below tanks and other types of water storage structures. The extraordinary water harvesting devices of the Thar Desert are called kundis. These traditional water harvesting systems have passed the test of time and are suited to the specific environments in which they had evolved.

The late Anil Agarwal, the founder of Centre for Science and Environment, in his seminal work - - Dying Wisdom, and Anupam Mishra of Gandhi Peace Foundation in his book, Aaj bhi khare hain talab, have documented various other techniques of water harvesting prevalent in India. However, these indigenous traditional local systems of water harvesting have been neglected and relegated to the status of minor irrigation. Substantial portion of budgetary allocation has been spent on the development of major and medium irrigation and multiple projects without any unequivocal success. Though under the MGNREGA millions of check dams, ponds, and other

structures have been constructed, the prime intention was not to overcome water scarcity, but to provide employment. The impact of this labour has not shown up in the country's water reserve. The structures were not designed to hold water. In most cases they were holes in the ground that were quickly filled up with soil by the next season.

In addition to water harvesting, water recycling is essential for larger consumers such as hotels, public institutions and industries. Domestic water is not utilised fully and nearly 85 to 90 per cent of the water is returned as sewage, sullage or drainage. With appropriate treatment this can be used for irrigation, groundwater recharge or even recycled for domestic use. The recycled water may be used for several purposes, including agricultural needs but not for drinking. It is estimated that recycling of water may reduce the per capita requirement by nearly 25 per cent of the present consumption and enable a larger percentage of the population to get adequate potable water.

Hindi litterateur Mahadevi Verma once said, it is not possible for any human being to take a step forward without putting one foot firmly on the ground. Similarly, a society which tries to move ahead without keeping itself firmly rooted in its own traditions tends to fall. A revival of traditional water harvesting systems is essential today. But the use of traditional technology does not mean that we don't need modern science. Innovation and upgradation should be an essential part of reviving our traditions in water harvesting. Over the years, the state has replaced the traditional role of communities and households in meeting their water needs. We need a people's technology, a technology that the people can develop, use and manage themselves.

The only sustainable solution to our water woes is mass movements designed and driven by local communities. KR Narayanan, former President of India, once remarked: 'A people's movement for water can help to deal with a lot of the ills that we face today.' Such a movement empowers people to decide the location of the proposed water bodies and to manage it for their needs. When Mahatma Gandhi launched the civil disobedience movement in 1921, Jinnah mockingly said, 'It would only appeal to the young, ignorant, illiterate.' But Gandhiji realised that only mass movements can change societies. His message of a people-centred development remains even truer for the 21st century. It is now abundantly clear that only mass movements can solve India's water woes.

The impetus to such movements has been stressed by the European Water Framework Directive -
- 'Water is not a commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such'.

(Concluded)