

LIST OF NEWSPAPERS COVERED

BUSINESS LINE

HINDU

STATESMAN

TELEGRAPH

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CIVIL SERVICE

HINDU, JUL 28, 2014

TS Secretariat employees oppose draft norms on staff division

Telangana Secretariat employees' bodies have strongly opposed the draft guidelines issued by Kamalanathan Committee for division of employees between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States.

Speaking to reporters separately in the Secretariat on Monday, TNGOs Secretariat unit president Shravan Kumar Reddy and Secretariat Women Employees' Association president D. Subhadra said the guidelines were against the interests of Telangana staff. They stated that option should not be given to the spouses if both belonged to one State.

SC, ST employees, Heads of Departments and Secretariat employees should be divided based on their nativity as giving option them would lead to Andhra Pradesh employees occupying several posts in Telangana, they explained. Options to SC, ST employees would deny new employment opportunities to SC, ST aspirants of Telangana, they said. They alleged that the draft guidelines favoured AP staff as they were prepared in the AP Secretariat. They warned to agitate over the discrepancies in Section 18 (F) of the Presidential Order under which HoDs and Secretariat employees are given options.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

STATESMAN, JUL 28, 2014

Disband Yojana Bhavan

GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

Whatever little we have achieved was not because of, but in spite of, the Planning Commission. It is time to wind it up and bury the five-year plans once and for all

Before denouncing the idea as preposterous and heretical, let's take a hard look at the facts. The Planning Commission was created by an executive resolution of the Government of India in March 1950. The Commission is not a constitutional entity, but it enjoys extra-constitutional authority to recommend the transfer of almost half of our annual budgetary allocations to states as plan grants every year. It produces voluminous five-year plans full of fantastic rhetoric and fancy jargon, besides generating a plethora of reports on every conceivable subject. It is also known to entertain the nation by generating astounding statistics, especially in relation to poverty figures. Over the decades, the Planning Commission has grown into a mammoth bureaucracy that needs about Rs 100 crore of public funds annually to run its report-producing apparatus. For the past several decades, it has also become the major driving force behind doling out national resources in the form of ill-conceived and poorly-implemented Centrally Sponsored Schemes, through which the powers that be get access to public funds as well as the licence to misuse these funds for political ends.

There is only one mechanism provided in the Constitution for devolution of Central resources to the states ~ under Article 275, through the Finance Commission. But the spirit of fiscal federalism in the Constitution was hideously defeated by the creation of the Planning Commission and by giving it exclusive powers, without any constitutional backing, to transfer a huge amount of Central resources to states as plan transfers, while limiting the scope of the Finance Commission only to recommend non-plan transfers. The creation of the Planning Commission necessitated classification of expenditure into plan and non-plan, something again without any constitutional sanction. The device used for plan transfers is Article 282, meant for dealing with exceptional situations. These transfers are discretionary in nature, vulnerable to be influenced more by political rather than economic considerations and enabling the Centre to arm-twist any state, given the huge amounts at stake. When this arbitrary discretion of the Centre over transfer of plan funds was sought to be limited by making these transfers based on the so-called Gadgil formula, the Centrally Sponsored Scheme was the innovation introduced by the Centre to retain its hold over public funds, and to allow it to misuse these funds on cheap, wasteful and supposedly vote-catcher plan schemes. A number of such schemes have since proliferated unabated on political considerations, creating aberrations in our public finances all the way. Most of these transfers are also made outside the state budgets, so they bypass the usual budgetary, accounting and legislative controls. More than Rs one

lakh crore are thus transferred every year to states outside their budgets, often leading to huge wastes and leakages.

Plan transfers have now become tied to these fancy schemes and their allocations have taken quantum jumps in recent years. In the process, the fiscal space of the states has shrunk, their autonomy has suffered and their flexibility to launch schemes specific to their needs almost completely denuded. Other distortions followed as private sector investment naturally went to states with better infrastructure, widening the economic imbalance and disparity among states.

A debate on what the first four and a half decades of planning since independence had achieved is already passé. Despite such rhetoric as “socialistic pattern of society”, garibi hatao, “growth with stability and distributive justice”, “planning from below” and adoption of fanciful models of growth borrowed from US textbooks, output declined, prices soared, unemployment increased, poverty remained undented and growth continued to languish within the Hindu rate of 3.5 per cent till 1991 when the economy was poised precariously on the verge of failure. This was, in brief, the story of the first seven plans. But as more and more ambitious plans were introduced with ever more allocation of public funds, the Yojana Bhavan bureaucracy flourished, becoming still more powerful by doing the bidding of their political masters. Its style of functioning, however, became curiously and increasingly ran counter to a modern economy.

Over time, the Planning Commission determined what was to be produced in the economy, how much and by what means. After surveying the available resources, a growth target for each sector of the economy was fixed and investments allocated, specifying the type of projects and even the specific production techniques as well. Naturally, it led to an economy characterised by extensive regulation, protectionism and a public sector supposed to dominate the “commanding heights of the economy”. The size of the Government also grew in tandem. Under UPA II, we had 53 ministries overseeing every aspect of our lives. The extensive control only fuelled pervasive corruption all around and stifled growth. Vital sectors of the economy were nationalised, and the rest regulated by an elaborate system of licences and red-tapism that inhibited private investment, making the economy reel under this licence-permit raj. This tyranny of the State only benefited certain entrenched groups but smothered individual entrepreneurship.

In such a collectivised, centralised planned economy, economic democracy, growth and productivity became the ultimate casualties. The market ~ which propels growth in a modern economy ~ was not allowed to flourish. As Professor P R Brahmannda has observed ~ Instead of attacking poverty through a wage-goods model, the authorities chose a number of anti-poverty and public distribution measures, which were simply in the nature of fire-fighting exercised with large leakages. The result was forced impoverishment of the nation that earned the nickname of “Sick Man of Asia”. Add to

this the growth of black money, an offshoot of corruption, the heightened inequality and disparity, and the picture of an impending disaster was complete. Time magazine has quoted a recent McKinsey Global Institute report suggesting that even in 2012, “as many as 56 per cent of the Indians ~ some 680 million people ~ could not afford most basic needs like food, water, housing, sanitation and health care”. The truth of this finding wouldn’t be questioned by most Indians, except perhaps the diehard optimists. Economic reforms were introduced when it was realised that it was the market and not the Government that should drive the economy. In recognition of this fact, the Eighth Plan states in its preface that it was only “indicative” in nature and that the state could at best be a facilitator for investment by the private sector. But despite the declining share of public investment, post-reforms and the promotion of the PPP mode of investment, the role and importance of the Planning Commission did not diminish. Indeed, Yojana Bhavan’s role as the most important extra-constitutional allocator of plan resources has long jeopardised Centre-State relations. As the Commission on Centre-State Relations observed in its report (March 2010) ~ “Following the introduction of economic reforms in the country, the role of Central Planning seemed to have lost much of its relevance. There was a shrinking of the share of public sector investment. States saw an opportunity to regain ground lost to the Planning Commission. However, this hope was belied.” And the command and control mindset continued.

Command economies invariably tend to become corrupt because by concentrating economic power and authority, the normal decision-making process is given a go-by. Plans drawn on the basis of insufficient information were approved and implemented with disastrous results. As growth became sluggish, inequality increased, the rural-urban divide widened, resource allocation to different sectors remained lopsided and ad-hocism reigned supreme. The critical issues that affect the common man ~ inflation, poverty and unemployment ~ remained uncontrolled and unfettered. One is reminded of what Frederick Hayek wrote in *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944 ~ “There could hardly be a more unbearable and more irrational world than one in which the most eminent specialists in each field were allowed to proceed unchecked with the realisation of their ideals”. India certainly deserves better than be led by a set of technocrats far removed from ground realities but wielding unrestrained power and illegitimate authority. It is indeed time to realise that in a diverse country such as ours, where skill, talent and entrepreneurship are abundantly available, Centralised planning does not work. Whatever little we have achieved was not because of, but in spite of the Planning Commission. It is time to disband it and bury the five-year plans once and for all. Responsibility for planning henceforth should be delegated to the elected representatives in the respective States, where it logically and rightfully belongs.

The writer is a Director-General in the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India. The views expressed are personal and not the Government’s

EDUCATION

HINDU, JUL 25, 2014

Dinanath Batra's books are a must-read in Gujarat schools

RAHI GAIKWAD

Dinanath Batra, author who was responsible for the pulping of American scholar Wendy Doniger's book, has been prescribed compulsory reading in Gujarat schools.

The State government has issued a circular dated June 30 for six of Dr. Batra's books to all 42,000 primary and secondary schools in the State, Gujarat Education Minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, told *The Hindu*.

A local daily reported that Mr. Batra's books which dished out homilies such as not blowing candles for birthdays as it was against "western culture" and others which spoke of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, Bhtan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar as part of undivided India or "Akhand Bharat" have been proscribed as "supplementary literature" in schools.

"These are reference books and part of the syllabus. The writer Mr. Batra was once a member of NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) an organisation associated with nationalist thought. Mr. Batra's books are on Indian culture, history, character building, maths and other subjects. We have requested teachers and principals to read and teach the syllabus with these reference books. It may be useful," Mr. Chudasama said.

Asked if the books were compulsory reading, he said, "Yes, there are a must-read."

Mr. Batra stirred up a controversy earlier this year when he filed a lawsuit against Ms. Doniger's book *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. Publisher Penguin India buckled and decided to destroy all copies of the book.

TELEGRAPH, JUL 30, 2014

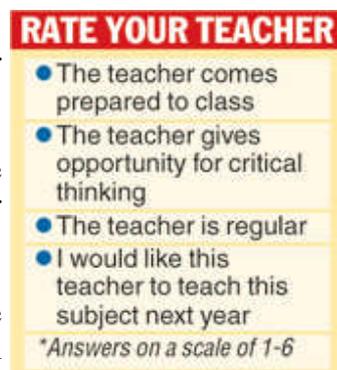
Student test for teachers

- Schools seek feedback on scale of 1 to 6 JHINUK MAZUMDAR

Student feedback about teachers has become a parameter for performance appraisal in some Calcutta schools.

How does the teacher handle the syllabus in class? Does she come prepared and encourage questions? Is the teacher prompt in returning test papers?

These are some of the questions that students from middle school till Class XII are being asked as part of a system prevalent in many universities.



At Sushila Birla Girls' School and Don Bosco Liluah, students fill in a questionnaire each about their subject teachers. Students are required to grade their teachers on a six-point scale in every aspect, where six is the highest and one the lowest. Students also need to rate their teachers in terms of overall performance.

Most school heads say they are experimenting with the system and are cagey about calling it a part of performance appraisal. "It is a small measure of what students think of their teachers rather than a foolproof or exhaustive method of evaluation," said Brother Jose Puthenpurackel, principal of Don Bosco Liluah.

Modern High's assessment form has questions meant to help teachers understand learning preferences.

A few schools have been seeking student feedback for around eight years while some adopted the practice a couple of years ago. Loreto House discontinued the process because it did not work out the way the school had expected. St. James' framed a questionnaire, only to withhold it because there was no consensus on whether students were mature enough to assess teachers.

The underlying fear is that students might get carried away while rating a teacher they have a strong liking or dislike for. A popular teacher might be someone who gives "free periods" while the unpopular one could be a disciplinarian who teaches well.

The schools that have persisted with the system feel that 90 per cent of the students are not prejudiced. They are seen as mature enough to judge what is good for them and understand that how they assess a teacher will have a bearing on his or her conduct and proficiency in teaching.

But isn't there a danger of students ganging up against a teacher they don't like? "If all or most students give a low score to a teacher in a particular area, that needs to be investigated," said Sharmila Bose, principal of Sushila Birla Girls' School.

So how much weight does student feedback carry during the performance appraisal of teachers? "It is a part of the evaluation process. A teacher discharges many duties that a student can't quantify. The teacher's role in a school is multi-dimensional and one of these dimensions is assessed by students," principal Bose said.

Schools maintain a record of how students have rated a teacher and the result is communicated to the person so that he or she can work on the deficiencies, perceived or real. The trick, as principal Sunirmal Chakravathi of La Martiniere for Boys says, is to take whatever a student says "with a pinch of salt".

"If a student is extremely negative about a teacher, he/she might be assessing the person on parameters other than the quality of teaching. If a student is all praise for a teacher, it should raise a doubt," Chakravathi said.

Modern High asks questions about the learning experience and not about the teachers. The school distributes assessment forms among students from classes VI to XI. The questionnaire includes a section where the student has to specify which subjects they like and which they don't. "Teachers appreciate the system rather than find it threatening," said Devi Kar, director of Modern High.

Do you think students should be asked to evaluate their teachers?

ENVIRONMENT

STATESMAN, JUL 28, 2014

An alternative approach to cleaning up the Ganga

Bharat Dogra

Thanks partly to the crucial role of Varanasi in the elections, the subject of controlling pollution in the Ganga has received renewed emphasis. This is likely to be a priority for the new government led by Narendra Modi. This may be the right time for remembering the approach to this issue advocated by the late Prof. Virbhadra Mishra, who is remembered for his complete dedication to the task of reducing pollution in the holy river, particularly in and around Varanasi.

The Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF) has emerged as a living example of this effort at mobilising science and spirituality to protect the Ganga, largely because of the unique personality of its chairperson Prof. Veer Bhadra Mishra. On the one hand, he was the mahant (high priest) of the Sankat Mochan Temple of Varanasi, a post he inherited from his father at the age of 14. On the other hand, he was also a distinguished civil engineer, having been a professor of hydraulic engineering at the Benares Hindu University (BHU) and head of the dept. of civil engineering. Prof. Mishra was thus in uniquely ideal circumstances to perform exceptionally valuable work for protecting India's most holy river.

With the establishment of the Sankat Mochan Foundation in 1982, many other like-minded persons, mostly teachers in the BHU, got a forum to work together for protecting the Ganga from pollution.

The work of Prof. Veer Bhadra Mishra and SMF has been applauded internationally. Prof. Mishra was named in the Global 500 Roll of Honour at Rio Earth Summit in 1992. He was chosen as Hero of the Planet by Time magazine for his work to protect environment.

Prof. Mishra once said: "Faith and commitment in Gangaji on one side and science and technology on the other are like two parallel banks of the rivers. They don't meet. But both these banks must be firm and strong. They are essential to protect the river and solve the problem of pollution. We are convinced that faith and science together can take care of the whole earth and its wonderful flora and fauna. The goal of global peace and happiness could be realised only by interfacing faith and science."

Initially, the SMF had to spend most of its energy and meagre resources in first checking the wrong priorities and technologies of the existing pollution control effort initiated under Ganga Action Plan I (GAPI). The objectives of this plan were very noble, but at the implementation level the priorities were very lopsided and the technologies were most

inappropriate, with the result that crores of rupees were drained away without fulfilling the objectives.

So before SMF could make any constructive contribution, it first had to struggle very hard against the authorities who were not only working with wrong priorities and technologies but were trying to push forward the same failed technologies into an extended second phase of GAP.

A lot of SMF's effort went into collecting and disseminating solid evidence of the failure of the existing GAP efforts. However, it should be said to the credit of SMF that side-by-side it continued to think of alternatives.

In brief, the stand of the SMF has been that earlier the authorities could not stop some 30 drains flowing into the river, while its alternative was based on checking the flow of these drains into the river, so that 95 per cent of the pollution of the river can be checked. As Prof. Mishra said: "The most important fact about the pollution of the Ganga here and in other cities is that as long as the point sources of pollution are not stopped from flowing into the river and as long as the infrastructure for this is not created, nothing else that anyone does can significantly reduce or check the pollution of river or improve the quality of its water."

An alternative ~ a very promising one at that ~ was presented by the Sankat Mochan Foundation. It is described here in the words of Prof. Mishra:

" SMF has prepared a project feasibility report which would use gravity force (and not the scarce and undependable electrical energy available in India) for interception and diversion of the point sources of pollution causing about 95% pollution of the river. Secondly it would use a system comprising of four ponds arranged in series and known as AIWPS (Advanced Integrated Wastewater Pond System) for treating the wastewater. This system is very good for a tropical country like India.

"The first pond is anaerobic and guarantees complete methane fermentation of organic matter, leaving practically no sludge. In the second pond, micro algae use sunlight to produce abundant amount of oxygen needed for the aerobic bacteria working in it to provide next stage of treatment. This algae will assimilate and remove the chemical pollutants also. The third pond ensures quiescent conditions for algae to settle down and get removed. The fourth point is the maturation pond where the waste water is allowed to stay for a long period for most of the fecal bacteria to perish."

This technology, according to Prof. Mishra, is based on "the most efficient way to use solar energy for algal photosynthetic oxygen release from the supporting water and discovering the special design requirements to foster in pond methane formation, so efficient that it virtually eliminates the costly sludge removal required for any waste

stabilisation system." This approach is based, he said, "on ecologically efficient natural system for wastewater treatment and water reclamation."

At the end of the full treatment, the water will have been cleaned up enough to be used for irrigation. There is scope for limited careful fisheries too in the pond.

The essence of this approach is that (i) point sources should not discharge water into the river, (ii) water-waste should be taken by gravity to treatment plant and (iii) treatment should be based as far as possible on natural systems, in particular making the best use of sunshine; (iv) whatever waste is left should be innocuous enough to be used as irrigation and manure.

So while location-specific changes will have to be made for various cities, these important features of the Varanasi - SMF model should be kept in mind as much as possible while coming up with suitable alternatives in other places. Some aspects of this approach can be very useful in reducing the pollution of other rivers as well.

The writer is a freelance journalist who has been involved with several social initiatives and movements

FINANCIAL MARKET

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 31, 2014

Rising RBI investments in US Govt. bonds

Indo-US relations, which have become more stable than before because of the new economic relationship, now have an unexpected major underpinning — investments by the Reserve Bank of India in US Government bonds. The latest figures released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have brought out the fact that as Japanese investments in the US have fallen drastically, most of the new investments in the US have come from the central banks of developing countries like India, Malaysia, Taiwan, Braal, Mexico and Chile.

SEBI receives 25,524 complaints against companies

The Securities and Exchange Board of India received 25,524 complaints against 1,903 companies and 832 companies have resolved 15,102 complaints during the first fortnight of July. During the same period, 7,039 interim replies were also received from 399 companies reporting delay in redressal of complaints due to requirement of full information from the investors, banks, registrars to issue/share transfer agents, etc. This is in contrast to the 21,946 complaints against 1,786 companies that it received in the second fortnight of June.

Software industry should improve, says Minister

The Indian software industry has to overcome weaknesses such as the lack of sustained marketing, over-dependence on services rendered on site and dependence on the US to become a global player, the Union Minister of State for Electronics, Chemicals and Fertilisers, Mr. Eduardo Faleiro, said. To help the industry, the Government had launched a set of policy initiatives such as a five-year tax holiday for software export units, software technology parks and reduced customs duty, the Minister said.

(This article was published on July 31, 2014)

HEALTH SERVICES

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 31, 2014

The paradox that is Indian healthcare

SUDARSHAN BALLAL

The best and the worst of facilities exist cheek by jowl. This glaring contradiction needs to be addressed

India is an ancient land, where the concept of Ayurveda evolved centuries ago, well before the allopathic branch of medicine was even discovered. Susruta and Charaka were pioneers in medicine in times when the concept of modern medicine was nowhere on the horizon.

However, in a remarkable irony, we have squandered our legacy of being innovators and are now considered as a developing country in healthcare.

As a developing nation, the demand for quality healthcare is growing fast. Therefore, it is imperative that the policymakers channelise the growth of healthcare services so that it caters to every section of our society.

For prevention

The first step towards this change should be a move from curative healthcare to preventive healthcare. This will not be an expensive affair; it will also help us reach out to a larger population base.

The Government needs to make a more effective intervention in the area of preventive and primary healthcare. Also, it needs to move away from being just a healthcare provider to an insurer at the tertiary level. It could refer to universal healthcare efforts such as the NHS in the UK or Medicare in the US.

Over the next five years the Government's healthcare spend should increase to at least 5 per cent of the GDP compared to a little over 1 per cent now — which is low in relation to the developed nations.

India needs a major revamp of the healthcare infrastructure, which includes upgrading primary healthcare systems to provide preventive healthcare. Awareness on preventive healthcare measures, nutrition, prenatal care, vaccinations and counselling on the importance of hygienic practices — like sanitation and clean drinking water — should be pursued aggressively.

At one end of the spectrum we have high-end hospitals delivering healthcare comparable to any developed nation, (almost 22nd century kind of care); in sharp contrast to this just a few hundred kilometres away in the villages, one does not even have basic primary care (19th century kind of healthcare).

The tragedy of our healthcare system is that the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is increasing. Unless a radical change is made where affordable healthcare is available to all, we will have a social revolution on our hands.

A huge percentage of our 1.2 billion population still does not have any access to, or cannot afford, the modern healthcare service.

There is a massive deficit in healthcare facilities and personnel even though we are one among those who train the largest number of healthcare professionals in the world. We could easily build one hospital (600 beds) a day for the next 20 years and still not match the demand for beds in the country.

We do complex robotic surgery, heart and brain surgeries, and various transplants in some of our city hospitals but sadly we also have extremely high maternal and infant mortality rates in some of our poorly-run States, which are even worse than Sub-Saharan Africa.

Three-tier model

The Government should focus on promoting primary healthcare at all rural centres, secondary care hospitals at taluk levels and tertiary care establishments at district hospitals.

Supporting primary and secondary care could be predominantly the Government's responsibility, while tertiary care could be promoted as a public-private partnership.

Universal availability of tertiary care to all citizens is still a mirage and even developed countries are finding it difficult to sustain this. For example, if we had to provide dialysis or transplant for all patients with kidney failure the cost would be almost \$10 billion a year, which is more than our healthcare budget for all diseases.

Another paradox in our healthcare system is that we are expected to deliver world-class healthcare at third world costs. Many of these medical procedures (transplants and surgeries) in India are done at 10 per cent or the cost, or less, incurred in the US.

However, it is still deemed expensive by the common man because most of them pay for it from their pockets, unlike in the developed nations where the Government, insurance and social security net takes care of the costs.

The recent court rulings on awarding huge compensations in medical negligence may make it very difficult for smaller nursing homes, which probably deliver more than 70 per cent of rural and semi-urban healthcare, to continue functioning. These are issues we need to discuss at the highest levels and come to a reasonable consensus of what is ideal and what is practical and achievable in our set-up.

Need more hands

Another aspect that is vital is lack of nursing, para-medical personnel and doctors, both at the MBBS and post-graduate level.

We need to increase the availability of skilled healthcare workers at all levels. This calls for liberalisation of the medical education policy to allow for more doctors especially at the postgraduate level to be trained at corporate/private hospitals.

Opening medical colleges in every district and using the district hospital facilities would also be benefited if sourced from a PPP. This would bridge the demand-supply gap in medical services.

To make treatments more affordable we need to reduce the duty on all life-saving and critical medical devices along with encouraging and incentivising local production of these.

The concept of universal healthcare is encouraging but the cost of care has to be reasonable so that private players will come forward.

It is an absolute must in our country, where the private sector accounts for a large majority of healthcare, to have public- private participation.

Unfortunately, our country is categorised into two sections — the well-to-do Indian who can get the best of healthcare and the poor Indian who is relegated to 19th century healthcare, usually in semi-urban and rural India.

The greatest challenge is to bridge these two Indias.

The writer is the Medical Director of Manipal Health Enterprises

(This article was published on July 31, 2014)

HISTORY

TELEGRAPH, JUL 26, 2014

CAPTIVE IDEOLOGUES

- *History beyond Marxism and Hindutva*

Politics and Play - Ramachandra Guha

In October 1984, I got my first academic job at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in Kolkata (then Calcutta). A week after I joined, a friend from Chennai (then Madras) sent me a petition on the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka, which he hoped some of my colleagues would sign. The first person I asked was a senior historian of Northeast India, whose work I knew but with whom I had not yet spoken. He read the petition, and said: “As Marxists, the question you and I should be asking is whether taking up ethnic issues would deviate attention from the ongoing class struggle in Sri Lanka.”

My colleague was known to be a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Yet I was struck by the way in which he took it for granted that I must be a party man too. Although this was our first meeting, he immediately assumed that any new entrant to the Centre must, like him and almost all the other members of the faculty, be a Marxist as well.

In the 1980s, Marxism occupied a dominant place in the best institutes of historical research in India. There were three reasons for this. One was intellectual, the fact that Marxism had challenged the conventional emphasis on kings, empires and wars by writing well-researched histories of peasants and workers instead. Indian history-writing was shaped by British exemplars, among them such great names as E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, Marxist pioneers of what was known as ‘history from below’.

The second reason for Marxism’s pre-eminence was ideological. In the 1960s and 1970s, anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa were led by Communist parties. Figures such as Ho Chi Minh and Samora Machel were icons in India (as in much of the Third World). These fighters for national freedom were supported by Soviet Russia and Communist China, but opposed by the United States of America and the capitalist world more generally. To be a Marxist while the Cold War raged, therefore, was to be seen as identifying with poor and oppressed people everywhere.

The third reason why there were so many Marxist historians in India was that they had access to State patronage. In 1969, the Congress split, and was reduced to a minority in the Lok Sabha. To continue in office, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sought, and got, the support of MPs of the Communist Party of India. At the same time, several former Communists joined the Congress and were rewarded with cabinet positions. Now the ruling party began leaning strongly to the left in economic policy — as in the nationalization of banks, mines and oil companies — and in foreign policy, as in India’s ‘Treaty of Friendship’ with the Soviet Union.

In 1969, before the Congress and Mrs Gandhi had turned so sharply to the left, the government of India had established the Indian Council of Social Science Research. The ICSSR was meant to promote research on the profound social and economic transformations taking place in the country. The Council funded some first-rate institutions, such as the Institute of Economic Growth in Delhi, the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in Pune, and the Centre for Development Studies in Trivandrum.

History is both a social science and a branch of literature. In theory, historical research should also have been within the ICSSR's brief. However, in 1972, the government established an Indian Council of Historical Research instead. The education minister at the time, Nurul Hasan, was himself a historian. Those who promoted and ran the ICHR were, in personal terms, close to Professor Hasan. In ideological terms, they were Marxists or fellow-travellers.

The two men responsible for establishing the ICSSR were the economist, D.R. Gadgil, and the educationist, J.P. Naik. Both were outstanding scholars, but neither was a Marxist. They were true liberals who promoted high-quality research regardless of ideology or personal connections. The ICHR, on the other hand, was from the beginning dominated by left-wing historians who favoured themselves and their friends in the distribution of funds for research, travel, and translation.

The control of Marxists over the ICHR weakened slightly in the 1980s, but was then re-established when Arjun Singh became education minister in 1991. He was persuaded that the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign could best be opposed by the State sponsoring 'secular' and 'scientific' history. Marxist historians flocked to his call, accepting projects and appointments within the minister's favour.

In 1998, the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power. The new education minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, was an ideologist of the right rather than left. Under him, the ICHR was handed over to academics charged with, among other things, diminishing the contributions of socialists to the freedom movement and discovering the origins of the river Saraswati.

In courting Marxist historians, Arjun Singh took inspiration from Nurul Hasan. In promoting *Hindutva* scholars, the current HRD minister is following in the tracks of M.M. Joshi. Hence the recent appointment of Y. Sudershan Rao as chairman of the ICHR. I had never heard of Professor Rao before, and, nor, it appears, have most other historians. Since he belongs to Andhra Pradesh, I asked some historians in that state what they knew. They described Professor Rao as a "non-descript scholar who does not have any academic or intellectual pretensions", but was known to be close to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. They added that despite his ideological bias and lack of scholarly distinction, he was an amiable and friendly man.

His personal charm notwithstanding, Professor Rao has not published a major book, nor a single scholarly essay in a professional journal. However, he has made known his belief in the essential goodness of the caste system, and the essential historicity of the *Ramayana*

and the *Mahabharat*. These may be among the reasons why he has been appointed chairman of the ICHR.

The Marxists who once ran the ICHR were partisan and nepotistic, but also professionally competent. The thought of Karl Marx — as distinct from the practice of Communist parties — provides a distinct analytical framework for understanding how human societies change and evolve. This privileges the role of technology and of social conflict between economic classes. Marxist historiography is a legitimate model of intellectual enquiry, albeit one which — with its insistence on materialist explanations — is of limited use when examining the role of culture and ideas, the influence of nature and natural processes, and the exercise of power and authority.

A sophisticated intellectual culture should have room for able right-wing scholars too. In the US, conservative historians such as Niall Ferguson are both credible and prominent. Their work celebrates the stabilizing role of family and community, and argues that technological dynamism and respect for individual rights are not evenly distributed across cultures. And where Marxist historians chastise capitalists for exploiting workers, right-wing historians celebrate them for creating jobs and generating wealth.

Why are there no Indian equivalents of Niall Ferguson? This is because the right-wing here is identified with *Hindutva*, a belief system which privileges myth and dogma over research and analysis. And no serious historian can be expected to assume *a priori* that Ram was a real character, that Hindus are the true and original inhabitants of India, that Muslims and Christians are foreigners, and that all that the British did in India was necessarily evil.

Contrary to what is sometimes claimed in the press, there are many fine historians in India. From my own generation of scholars, I can strongly recommend — to student and lay reader alike — the work of Upinder Singh on ancient India, of Nayanjot Lahiri on the history of archaeology, of Vijaya Ramaswamy on the *bhakti* movement, of Sanjay Subrahmanyam on the early history of European expansion, of Chetan Singh on the decline of the Mughal State, of Sumit Guha on the social history of Western India, of Seema Alavi on the social history of medicine, of Niraja Gopal Jayal on the history of citizenship, of Tirthankar Roy on the economic consequences of colonialism, of Mahesh Rangarajan on the history of forests and wildlife, and of A.R. Venkatachalapathy on South Indian cultural history.

The scholars named in the preceding paragraph have all written excellent books, on different themes and periods, in different stylistic registers. They have all read Karl Marx and digested his ideas. At the same time, they are not limited or constrained by his approach. They have been inspired by other thinkers, other models, in their reconstructions of human life and social behaviour.

Like their counterparts outside India, these scholars bring to the writing of history both primary research and the analytical insights of cognate disciplines such as anthropology, political theory, and linguistics. Their personal or political ideology is secondary (if not

irrelevant) to their work, whose robustness rests rather on depth of research and subtlety of argument.

In the 42 years since the ICHR was founded, the historical profession has moved on. The economic and technological determinism of Marxism, once so appealing, has been found wanting in pushing the frontiers of research. If the HRD minister wanted a professional, non-partisan (and non-Marxist) scholar to head the ICHR, she had a wide field to choose from. But it appears that the minister wanted not a capable or respected historian, but a captive ideologue. And she has got one.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TELEGRAPH, JUL 30, 2014

STRATEGIC MISTAKES

Rightwing Indian Arab policy is founded on a misconception

DIPLOMACY: K.P. Nayar

If Sushma Swaraj believed that television images beamed to Gulf countries of the external affairs minister seated next to Najma Heptullah during the Rajya Sabha debate on the Gaza violence would make up for the perception among Indians, from Oman to Saudi Arabia and beyond, that the Narendra Modi government was unduly tilting towards Israel, she could not have been more mistaken. The Bharatiya Janata Party's core constituency mule-headedly wants India to be tied to Israel by an umbilical cord. But Arab countries expect the new government to break from stereotypes like the Heptullah-Swaraj image in mollicoddling them. Meaningless symbols have substituted substance in India's Arab policy for far too long.

Swaraj, as a consummate politician, should have realized that Modi's minister for minority affairs is a left over from that kind of past which the 2014 general election campaign promised to bury and turn over a new leaf. The external affairs minister should have known better than to assume that the Arab world is so gullible about India as to be taken in by her image spin of proximity to another of those self-styled representatives of Indian Muslims that heads of state or government and foreign ministers in West Asia are truly tired of.

The Rajya Sabha debate on Gaza was a chance to articulate a new Indian vision on West Asia, but the Modi government simply blew that chance. Perhaps it was only to be expected because the Bharatiya Janata Party's huge handicap in dealing with Jews and the Jewish diaspora is that the party's understanding of Israel and its policies, especially of Tel Aviv's India policy, has no relation to ground realities. Worse, the present government grossly underestimates India's strength in dealing with Israel. That was abundantly in evidence in Parliament's treasury benches throughout the debate on Gaza.

For years, the BJP has carried a curious diplomatic baggage on Israel and it has now brought that baggage into the government: that baggage is an albatross in the form of a poorly informed belief that New Delhi and Tel Aviv have a shared view on nuclear issues simply because neither country has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. For several decades, Israelis in senior positions in their governments and in high standing outside their governments have told me that beyond a common refusal to sign the NPT, the two countries do not share anything or see eye to eye on nuclear proliferation. India has refused to sign the NPT because it believes that the treaty is discriminatory and that nuclear non-proliferation as an issue must be addressed globally. Successive governments in New Delhi have rejected a notion that the "big five" nuclear powers have attempted to promote and pressure India with: that proliferation in South Asia must be addressed regionally between India and Pakistan or, at a stretch, including China as well —

recognizing, of course, that China has the ‘right’ to possess nuclear weapons under the NPT.

For Israel, which takes a diametrically opposite position, nuclear proliferation is a regional issue. Israel has no problem — unlike India — with the United States of America or the United Kingdom having nuclear weapons and preventing countries other than the “big five” from benefiting from advanced nuclear technology, even for peaceful purposes. The day Israel is assured that no Arab country can have access to bomb-making technology it will sign the NPT as many times as the international community demands of it.

But many Indians have never understood this critical difference. Of course, the Israelis have cleverly obfuscated on this issue because it eminently suits them to do so, misleading or confusing Indian public opinion by fostering the myth that their two countries stand shoulder to shoulder on nuclear matters. In the process, Tel Aviv has taken gullible Indians in public life, including several BJP Rajya Sabha members who spoke on Gaza in Parliament, for a nice little ride over this subtlety.

A small news item in several newspapers a few days ago ought to have opened the eyes of BJP stalwarts who want Modi and Swaraj to change India’s policy towards Israel and the Arab world: they appear to have no qualms that the changes they are championing would reduce New Delhi to a poodle of Tel Aviv and the Jewish lobby in America. The news item in question was about the Israeli embassy in the capital cancelling its *iftar* that was scheduled for July 24. “*Iftar?* At the Israeli embassy?” one BJP leader wondered in complete and genuine innocence, in a conversation with me the day after newspapers carried the story.

Every politician is not — and need not be — an expert on foreign policy or international affairs, so this BJP leader and a legion of others like him in the party may be excused for not knowing that Israel has a large Arab population as its full-fledged citizens and that many of these Arabs are Muslims who freely practice their religion, which has more in common with Judaism than with Hinduism or any faith with similar customs or traditions.

Unknown to many BJP faithfuls, Jews relate to Islam much more than they relate to Hinduism if only because the former two faiths have the same roots. Now that the BJP is in government and is likely to be in power for at least five years, it is imperative that, minimally, its legislators, and others who are tasked to talk on issues like the Arab-Israeli conflict, are tutored in some basic facts about Israel: more importantly, the crux of where India’s real interests lie in dealings with the Jewish state.

During multiple visits to Israel — including Track II visits — in the last two decades since New Delhi established full diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv, I have been told by many Israelis — including rabbis, strategic thinkers and those who shape public opinion in that country — that Indians are under a great delusion about Israeli policy. That delusion is that Indians wrongly assume that Israelis are anti-Muslim. Scratch any Israeli

Jew and he is anti-Arab or, at least, suspicious to the point of being ambivalent about Arabs, including Israeli citizens of Arab descent. That is significantly different from being anti-Muslim. True, the Arabs want to wipe Israel off the map, but many of these Arabs are Christians, Druze and followers of faiths other than Islam. In fact, in the 1970s, when the Palestinians were a thorn on the side of the Jewish state with a greater ferocity than in later years, the Christian groups among the Palestinians did greater damage to Israel in real terms than any Muslim outfits.

Like the nuclear issue, this is a subtle distinction that is lost on BJP leaders, including some of those who spoke in the Rajya Sabha on the Gaza debate. During the 1990s, when I lived in New Delhi, one Israeli ambassador told me that he had made it his mission to befriend at least one new Indian Muslim family every month. In their blissful ignorance about Israel, that is perhaps more than what can be said about some vocal BJP leaders who now want the Modi government to tilt categorically towards the Jewish state.

It is true that changes have taken place in Israeli attitudes to Islam since the September 11 terrorist attacks that transformed the world. But those changes have been forced on Israeli policies largely by radical Islamists: fundamentally, the attitude of the Jews towards Islam remains unchanged and is at variance with that of the BJP, which mistakenly assumes, at various levels, that Israel and India ought to share a common hostility towards Islam.

As in the nuclear issue, Israel has found it expedient to let BJP leaders and fellow-travelers live with the notion that New Delhi and Tel Aviv are natural allies in a common cause against Islam. It eminently suits the Jewish lobby to foster such a mistaken notion. Unless the Modi government is alive to the dangers of such misconceptions India will come a cropper in protecting its vital interests in West Asia. The Rajya Sabha debate on Gaza was a warning to educate right-wing opinion on this critical issue.

JUDICIARY

HINDU, JUL 28, 2014

Centre to consult jurists on judicial appointments

J. VENKATESAN

Under new law, erring judges will answer to National Judicial Oversight Committee

In a meet convened by the Law Ministry, jurists on Monday will consider revamping the lapsed Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill to provide for a mechanism to deal with complaints against and removal of judges.

The previous Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha by the UPA government, has lapsed as it could not be passed in the Rajya Sabha for lack of consensus among political parties. The NDA government will consider reintroducing the Bill with modifications. Once revamped, the Bill will replace the Judges Inquiry Act.

The new law will set judicial standards and makes judges accountable for their lapses. It also mandates that judges of the High Courts and the Supreme Court declare their assets and liabilities, as well as those of their spouses and dependents, and file an annual return in this regard.

Under this new law, a National Judicial Oversight Committee will be set up under a former Chief Justice of India, enabling the public to lodge complaints against erring judges including the Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justices of High Courts. At present, there is no legal mechanism for dealing with complaints against judges. The judiciary has adopted the 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life' as a code of conduct without any statutory sanction.

LABOUR

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 31, 2014

Revision of labour laws to attract investments, create jobs: BCIC

Amendments will create conducive atmosphere, says BCIC

The Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC) has welcomed the Union Cabinet's decision to approve amendments to three key labour laws. The amendments to the labour law was proposed during the Budget announcement made by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

A N Chandramouli, President, BCIC said: "These amendments will create a conducive atmosphere for business and labour. Some of the recommendations such as doubling the provisions of overtime from 50 hours a quarter to 100 hours; relaxing the norms of female participation in labour intensive sectors such as , readymade garments, are long standing demands of the BCIC which has been finally addressed by the new Government."

Industry and labour friendly

"The proposed amendments of three key labour laws: The Apprentices Act-1961, The Labour Laws (exemption from furnishing returns and maintaining registers by certain establishments) Act-1988 and the Factories Act-1948 will fast forward reforms to the archaic legislation, which was considered a severe impediment to output growth and employment creation in the labour-intensive manufacturing sector," added Anuj Sharma, Senior Vice President, BCIC.

'Well strategized'

T Valliappa, Vice President, BCIC said: "Given the fast changing economic dynamics the world over, the amendments is a well strategized synergy to promote both labour welfare and industry-friendly reforms."

He further added that these proposals would create a favourable climate and improve the ease of doing business in the country. This would benefit employers and employees. He further added that reducing the number of days to 90 from 240, for eligibility of benefits, will encourage more absenteeism which the industry is already grappling with.

(This article was published on July 31, 2014)

LIBRARIES

HINDU, JUL 28, 2014

[Libraries in A.P. gathering dust](#)

KNOWLEDGE HUBS CRY FOR HELP

PROBLEMS GALORE

				
Housed in dilapidated buildings	Shortage of staff	Lack of proper power supply	No infrastructure facilities	Fund crunch

PRIZED ONES | Ramamohan Library at Vijayawada | Sri Gowthami Regional Library in Rajahmundry | Besant Theosophical College Library at Madanapalle | Andhra Sahitya Parishad library at Kakinada

PROUD COLLECTIONS	Manuscripts of 'Colonel McKenzie' and 'Tamra Sasanalu'	Original manuscript of the English translation of Jana Gana Mana
Rare collection of 25,000 to 30,000 books of colonial rule		

National Knowledge Commission, in its report, said libraries have a social role in making knowledge publicly available to all. They serve as local centres of information and learning, and are gateways to national and global knowledge.

But, there are many libraries that are in neglected state with hardly any funding from the State government. Of the crores of rupees that the government spends every year on preserving history, not a penny seems to come to libraries, where rare books of the colonial rule gather dust.

Housed in dilapidated buildings with infrequent supply of electricity, shortage of staff, fund crunch, the libraries are crying for attention.

Take for instance; Ramamohan Library in Vijayawada established in 1903 wears a deserted look from outside, although it has 70 to 80 visitors every day. It has rare collection of 25,000 to 30,000 books of colonial rule. "We have approached the government for assistance and things will be fine in near future," says library organising Secretary Ch. Koteswara Rao.

Sri Gowthami Regional Library in Rajahmundry, formed way back in 1898, has collection that dates back to 17 and 18 centuries. More than 400 manuscripts of 'Colonel McKenzie' and 'Tamra Sasanalu' of 13th and 14th centuries are available in the library. But, it is still waiting for a national status and recognition by the Ministry of Human Resources.

"We got national status for Telugu language after making relentless efforts. For getting the same status to the library may be we have to continue our struggle in residual state of Andhra Pradesh," commented Sannidhanam Narasimha Sarma, who worked as Librarian.

Vetapalem Saraswata Niketanam was started by V.V. Shreshti in 1918 to further the cause of library movement and freedom struggle. Now it is visited by research scholars from India and abroad for reference material. The books in the library run by 80-year-old K. V. D. Mallikarjun Rao has been digitised for the benefit of researchers who get a new insight on visiting the library. He prefers to run the library with liberal contributions from book lovers, scholars and philanthropists.

The Besant Theosophical College Library at Madanapalle is gearing up for its centenary celebrations this year. College principal K. Kizar Mohamed says, "The library has nearly 2 lakh books of various streams. Some of the rarest books dating back to centuries are also available." The original manuscript of the English translation of National Anthem Jana Gana Mana by Ravindranath Tagore is among the proud collections. Andhra Sahitya Parishad library established by historian and writer Jayanthi Ramayya Panthulu in Kakinada in 1911 needs a facelift. The government sanctioned Rs. 4 crore for the renovation of the library and to provide chemical treatment to rare palm scripts available in the library. But, the works are not progressing well due to administrative reasons. Another library at Pithapuram, Sri Suryaraya Viswananda Grandhalayam, is celebrating its centenary this year.

(With inputs from G.V.R. Subba Rao, S.Murali, B.V.S. Bhaskar, K. Umashanker, and K. N. Murali Sankar)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

HINDU, JUL 25, 2014

Union Home Ministry plans to reconstitute NDMC

SOWMIYA ASHOK

GAURAV VIVEK BHATNAGAR

The move will facilitate replacement of four nominated Congress members in the 13-member body

The Union Home Ministry is learnt to have decided to reconstitute the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) midway as it will facilitate the replacement of four nominated Congress members in the 13-member body.

According to sources, while the file is learnt to have been approved by Union Minister Rajnath Singh, a notification to make the changes effective is likely to be issued within the next few days.

Currently, Ashok Ahuja, Tajdar Babbar, Suka Ram and I. A. Siddique are the Congress representatives in the Council, which provides civic amenities to the Lutyens' Zone. With the decision likely to come into effect soon, sources said Thursday's council meeting could well be the last with Congress nominees on the panel.

By virtue of being an MP from New Delhi, senior BJP leader Meenkashi Lekhi is already chairing the council meetings. Former Delhi Cantonment MLA Kanwar Singh Tanwar is likely to be one of the four BJP nominees to be appointed as council members.

If Mr. Tanwar is nominated to the council, a post which he held earlier for several years, he will be a council member alongside current Delhi Cantonment MLA Surinder Singh, who defeated him in the 2013 Delhi Assembly Elections and now occupies the room that was earlier with the former BJP legislator.

The council, which was established under the NDMC Act, comprises 13 members, including chairman Jalaj Srivastava, sitting MLA from New Delhi and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Mr. Singh, Ms. Lekhi and five other members who are officers with the Central and Delhi governments.

This apart, four members are to be nominated by the Central government in consultation with the Delhi Chief Minister. With Delhi being under the President's Rule and the Lieutenant-Governor reporting to the Union Home Ministry, the decision lies with the Ministry to replace these four members.

MUSEUMS

HINDU, JUL 25, 2014

President opens museum at Rashtrapathi Bhavan

President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the new museum at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Friday.

Knowledge hub for digital literacy and innovative teaching also inaugurated

President Pranab Mukherjee, who completed two years in office on Friday, inaugurated a museum with fibre glass statues of former Presidents in Rashtrapati Bhavan in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and senior Cabinet Ministers.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said: “I dedicate the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum to the nation. I am sure this museum will enable the people of our nation obtain an inside view of Rashtrapati Bhavan, its art, architecture and vibrant community as well as educate them on the lives of various Presidents.”

The museum has an interactive zone where visitors can learn more about former Presidents and see audio-video clippings related to them.

The President also inaugurated a knowledge hub within the Dr. Rajendra Prasad Sarvodaya Vidyalaya at Rashtrapati Bhavan and 16 serviced apartments. The knowledge hub will be a space for innovative teaching and learning and use collaborative, interactive and pedagogical practices to help teachers connect to the world outside their classroom.

A mobile application for Rashtrapati Bhavan, a new design for the President's website and a video film on the important events of the second year of presidency were also released.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

STATESMAN, JUL 25, 2014

Politicians playing with fire

Rajinder Puri

Political leaders, MPs and MLAs belonging to all parties have changed the meaning of political activism. Earlier it was confined to fasting, dharnas and sometimes even gheraos. There may have been elements of hypocrisy in much of this activity, but it was largely peaceful. Now even elected legislators become physical and commit violence at the drop of a hat. TMC leaders thrash policemen in Kolkata, West Bengal. BJP leaders instigate and participate in violence in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh. Congress politicians spread violence in Betul, Madhya Pradesh. And leaders of the Shiv Sena are of course notorious for violence and intimidation. A recent incident in the Maharashtra Sadan in the capital is symptomatic of the new political culture.

Shiv Sena MPs residing in Maharashtra Sadan vainly complained for months against its poor service and inedible food. Then along with electronic media and the Sadan's manager they disrupted the dining hall. In presence of the media, one MP, Mr Rajan Vichare, tried forcibly to shove food down the throat of a catering staffer. He happened to be a Muslim observing his Ramzan fast. The incident blew up and acquired communal overtones. Mr Vichare claimed ignorance about the staffer's religion and later apologised for the error. The staffer, Mr Arshad Zubair, rubbished this as he was prominently wearing his name tag. The media went to town with this controversy. Shiv Sena leaders justified their anger. They miss the point.

Understandably, media and the Opposition ire focussed mainly on the insult to Muslims. Shiv Sena leaders claim genuine provocation due to atrocious service and food. They rebut any communal intent. BJP allies, with an eye on the polls, are tongue-tied. Home Minister Mr Rajnath Singh mumbled an evasive comment to media. For argument's sake, accept Mr Vichare's claim about no communal intent.

A more far-reaching and damaging aspect may well be the propensity to use illegal physical force by elected legislators. Is it not proving infectious and influencing public behaviour?

Note the widespread resort to violence and lynching by mobs across the nation. Note the increasing violence in impressionable minds, sometimes even leading to murder. Thanks to the example set by politicians who resort to violence and fail to enforce the law, Indian society is becoming increasingly violent both through individual acts and group action. This should be seen in the context of another development. Due to their scandalous conduct and propensity to violence, Indian politicians have by far overtaken the police as symbols of public hatred. This potent combination, becoming hate

objects in a violent society, should alarm the political class. Sooner or later a group of citizens could emerge to organise violence against politicians. The Maoists gained a measure of public sympathy by voicing grievances and targeting underpaid and overworked policemen. How much easier, less expensive, and more effective would be terrorist attacks against politicians by any organised group of citizens following a political agenda? Both the government and Opposition need to seriously reflect before it is too late.

STATESMAN, JUL 31, 2014

Politicised criminals

Previously criminals helped candidates to win, but now criminals compete among themselves to become legislators ~ a thoroughly undemocratic state of affairs, indeed a danger to democracy. A recent survey shows that at present 162 out of 545 Lok Sabha members and 1258 out of 4032 sitting MLAs have declared that criminal cases are pending against them ~ RAJINDAR SACHAR

A recent Supreme Court judgment on the Representation of People's Act, 1951 has sparked less panic and opposition than one would have expected . This is because the judgment exempts from its applicability the existing legislators; the present members of Parliament and state legislators going to polls this year are not really affected.

The Bench has sidestepped a five-judge decision in the Prabhakar case which had categorically held that the two categories, one of persons who are not legislators and the other who are legislators "is based on a well-established nexus with public purpose". The two situations are different; in the second, the vacation of a seat affects the House.

As it is, the courts on their own have permitted a convicted member only to mark his presence to prevent his disqualification; he is barred from taking part in the proceedings or vote till his appeal is decided. For all practical purposes, therefore, a convicted MLA plays no part in the deliberations of the legislature.

This interpretation by the Supreme Court will have serious consequences for opposition human rights activists, trade unionists and political activists, who are so indiscriminately prosecuted under various security laws or even during bandhs and demonstrations. In such a situation, the automatic vacation of the seat by a sitting legislator will vest the ruling party with arbitrary powers.

Consider the enormity of injustice to the elected legislator, who was not convicted at the time of being elected, but was convicted during his term. He will have to vacate his seat even if his conviction is set aside in appeal shortly thereafter. In the interim, another

person would have been elected. This can result in irreparable damage to the career of the political activist.

The court recognizes the anomaly, but observes that the legislator can ask for stay of conviction by the appellate court and if granted he can continue. With respect, is this not leaving things to the uncertainty of different reactions by judges, provoking the cynical comment in English law that what is justice is measured by the length of the Chancellor's foot. I am afraid this process is discretionary and will vary with the individual decisions of respective judges. This is hardly a satisfactory alternative to Section 8(4) of the Act, which had at least the practical objective to ensure that the electorate's choice is not nullified by the adverse decision of the trial court without giving an opportunity of being corrected on appeal which is his statutory right. In order to avoid further delay, it could be legislated that the seat will stand vacated if the first appeal fails. No further appeals or revision before the courts will prevent the seat from being vacated. It could also be provided that an appeal by a sitting convicted legislator will be decided within three months. This alternative has the merit of cleansing the electoral process. It will also act as a safeguard against irreparable harm and injustice to the elected legislator.

No, I am not underestimating the danger of criminalization of politics. Personally I would call it "politicalisation of criminals". Previously criminals helped candidates to win, but now criminals compete among themselves to become legislators ~ a thoroughly undemocratic state of affairs, indeed a danger to democracy.

A recent survey shows that at present 162 out of 545 Lok Sabha members and 1258 out of 4032 sitting MLAs have declared that criminal cases are pending against them. And this is despite the Vice-President, Mr. Hamid Ansari's warning in 2004 ~ "Exactly 23 per cent of MPs elected in 2004 had criminal cases registered against them ~ over half of these cases could lead to imprisonment of five years or more. The situation is worse in the case of MLAs. Are we not progressing?"

My opposition to the extreme interpretation by the Supreme Court, resulting in a validly elected legislator losing his seat, should not be interpreted as minimizing the danger of criminality in our legislatures. Rather the contrary. I feel that a more satisfactory mechanism to halt politicalisation of criminals is to enact a piece of legislation, that has been advocated by the People's Union for Civil Liberties. Specifically, that if six months before the polling date, a person has been chargesheeted by a court, he /she will be barred from contesting the next election. This timeframe will give the person concerned sufficient time to have the chargesheet quashed by an appellate court, thus negating the doubtful defence advanced by political parties of false cases being lodged against rivals on the eve of nomination date.

I am more disturbed by the second judgment holding valid Section 62(5) of Representation of People Act, 1951. It prohibits a person from voting if he is confined to

prison even on a petty offence or is in the lawful custody of the police. On the other hand, an accused, if he is rich ~ like for instance those charged in the Coalgate and telecom scandals ~ can vote. In essence, an anti-labour state is colluding to keep the disadvantaged in jail. The ordinary citizen will be inclined to agree with Charles Dickens' favourite character, Bumble, when he said; "If the law supposes that, then the law is an idiot", echoing in the same strain what provoked George Chapman (1559-1634) to say: "I am ashamed, the law is such an ass."

In the UK, the right to vote is only denied if a person is convicted and sentenced to 12 months in jail. In Israel, even a convicted person in jail is allowed to vote. As far back as 1955, the United Nations had resolved "that unconvicted prisoners are presumed to be innocent and shall be treated as such".

Why is it that the political parties, which are so upset over the latest Supreme Court ruling, are mysteriously silent and inactive on the question of amending election rules to give voters the right of negative voting, by carrying out the unanimous recommendation of the Election Commission, specifically to provide an extra button in the electronic voting machine to denote negative voting? Are the parties afraid of the possible answer ~ "None of the Above"?

The writer is former Chief Justice, Delhi High Court

TELEGRAPH

A FOOTNOTE TO MARX

The specially honed tactics of Bengal's lumpenproletariat First Person Singular - A.M.

Theorization on phenomena that have occurred or are occurring presents little problem. Sagacious minds can link aspects of a particular phenomenon, weave them together in a format that has a strong rational base and is capable of offering a prognosis on the sequences that might follow. The prognosis could click with events unfolding in the future, or go amiss because other factors might enter the picture. That would be no reflection, however, on the integrity of the prognosis. Human history is, after all, full of twists and turns. Neither Marx nor, for that matter, Lenin ever discussed the possibility of the emergence of fascism.

Marx and Lenin, or any of the pioneering Marxists, could not foresee the possibility of capitalism being sabotaged from within by a political formation that pretended to speak on behalf of the oppressed and exploited masses, and with the spell of sheer demagoguery, would seize State power through scoring a victory in the so-called democratic elections, which capitalism could afford to indulge in. Once installed in power, this formation would deftly avail itself of the established administrative wings of the government to smother the other political parties and take total control of executive and judicial authority. The party's goons would be let loose on all dissenters. Unbridled terrorization

and violence would visit whichever citizen or groups chose to resist or protest; the State's army and constabulary would aid and abet such activities. Capitalists would gladly go along since their interests would be fully protected by the goon bosses.

Marxist theory evolves and incorporates the lessons from developments in the human condition. The vast literature on the pre-conditions leading to and shaping the instruments of fascism are mostly the contribution of Marxist scholars. The so-called neo-liberals had their own pastime, dissecting the entrails of 'totalitarian communism', which helped to rescue them from the looming nightmare of fascist savagery.

Recent events in West Bengal tempt me to suggest that perhaps another Marxist formulation is in need of some reappraisal. These events in this eastern state are not receiving enough attention in the national and international media. The media have already reported several stories concerning the wayward, and often outrageous, activities of the present chief minister of West Bengal. Her ever-greater challenging instances of infringing the country's democratic institutions in recent months do not appear in their view as deserving of additional space. They could prove to be horrendously wrong. This is where I find it useful to draw some sort of a parallel between what happened in France in the 1840s with what is taking place in West Bengal 170 years later.

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, Marx describes in magnificent prose the nature and avocations of the lumpenproletariat assembled by Louis Napoleon who were terrorizing the people and availing themselves in full of the breakdown of governance in France: "Alongside decayed *roués* with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, rogues, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets...". To this impressive list, Mao Zedong, keeping in mind the context of his own country, would later add sections of the rural population who had been rendered landless and fallen back on banditry and similar means to sustain themselves. In the celebrated *Communist Manifesto* he wrote in collaboration with Engels, Marx expressed grave doubts concerning the prospects of the lumpenproletariat ever emerging as a stable social force: their interests, he seems to suggest, are too heterogeneous, bereft of any social goals, each constituent keen to satisfy its immediate interests and, where these interests are in conflict, turn against one another and add to the social instability.

What makes me sit up, though, is the extraordinary, almost eerie, resemblance, amounting to nearly total identity, between the diverse groups forming the corpus of the lumpenproletariat then terrorizing France and the lot on the prowl in West Bengal at the moment. I particularly relish Marx's last entry in the list, "pickpockets", who are another important category ruling the roost at this hour in West Bengal under the benign protection of the ruling party. And this is exactly where I have a feeling that, had Marx been around in the present times, he might have added a footnote qualifying his deep cynicism regarding the viability of the lumpenproletariat as a stable social force. For over three years now, West Bengal has witnessed a virtual dictatorship of the lumpenproletariat who have organized themselves into a fascistic political party under one supreme leader. What is generally known as 'law' has been done away with. In the

manner of incidents that happened in some countries in Europe seven or eight decades ago, the party of the lumpen has triumphed in the polls by promising the impoverished and exploited masses a regime of both peace as well as milk and honey, and thereby has come to occupy State power. Common criminals, murderers and rapists not excluded, currently control and guide the administration. More than one high court judge have failed to get arrested some of these lowest specimens of society against whom there are charges of the gravest nature and watch helplessly as their orders are not carried out. Their comments on the blatantly partisan manner the forces of law and order are going about in the performance of obligatory duties are left unanswered. But that is all. Their word is not law; in West Bengal, the lumpen now decide what constitutes the law.

It may appear to be a puzzling situation. India has a written Constitution asserting strict adherence to the tenets of democracy and explicitly laying down guidelines to prevent any deviation from their observance. Yet, how come in a particular part of the country, at this very moment, all democratic rules are being so blatantly defied, and those charged with the responsibility of ensuring the rule of law, especially the administration at the Centre, are keeping quiet?

The answer to the riddle is closely related to recent developments in the nation's polity. The Congress-led coalition government, formally in power in New Delhi till a couple of months ago, having both sold itself out to the so-called Washington Consensus on several crucial political and economic issues and at the same time increasingly assuming the character of crony capitalism, was aware of the growing animosity of a very large section of the electorate towards it. It was apprehending a major set-back in this year's Lok Sabha poll, but was still hopeful of forming the new government with help proffered by other, relatively minor, parties. In the circumstances, discretion, the Congress concluded, was the better part of valour before intervening in the affairs of West Bengal. There was also the sensitive issue of Centre-state relations. The syndicate of the lumpen that rules the state could make a huge hue and cry in case of any attempt to discipline them. Given the length they were capable of going to, the outcome could actually be the reverse of what was intended and the lumpen might gain further public support in the State. Seemingly both the Congress and the then major Opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, were not altogether confident whether, following this year's poll, they would or would not need outside help for putting together a viable coalition that could rule from New Delhi. Neither of them therefore had the daring to protest against the mayhem let loose by the lumpenproletariat in the eastern state. Applying the provisions of the well-known article 355 and 356, used in the past against recalcitrant Left regimes in the state, was not even dreamt of.

With the BJP on its own capturing more than half of the Lok Sabha seats, and forming on its own the government at the Centre, the circumstances ought to have altered fundamentally. They have not though. The BJP is in the horns of a dilemma. With the Left seeming to be completely obliterated, some BJP leaders are of course tempted to make a bid for power in West Bengal by getting rid of the lumpenproletariat. It could give the green signal to the CBI to pursue with vigour investigations into the innumerable criminal acts of the now defunct Saradha group with which many prominent members of

the lumpenproletariat are reportedly directly involved. It could put the squeeze on the lumpen state administration by delaying or denying, on this or that pretext, funds from the national exchequer. But there is the other, much larger, alternative hypothesis that the BJP leaders cannot afford to brush aside. As the general and rail budgets presented by the BJP government have already confirmed, the party will further intensify the process of handing over the economy to foreign interests as well as to the corporate groups, foreigners will now take over close to one-half of the equity of the most sensitive defence industry and the insurance business, in addition to the grip they have established in the banking sector. The assets of the financially most lucrative public-sector units are to be increasingly offered for sale in the stock market, and the floodgates will be opened across the entire economy to the entry of private interests in the name of the expansion of public-private partnership. The 'rising' middle class benefiting from the bonanza spurting from the software boom will offer cheers, but they are a tiny minority of the nation.

This situation might compel the BJP leadership to realize the likelihood of disillusionment growing fast among the millions who were carried away by the Modi wave. One consequence of such a realization could well be the revival of the Left with its epicentre once again in West Bengal, under a new set of leadership determined never to withdraw from the path of systematic and fearless resistance to the onslaughts against the peasantry, the working class and the immiserized middle class.

Should such a situation arise, the BJP might well have second thoughts. They could find it useful to supplement the RSS muscle-power by enlisting the support of the lumpenproletariat in West Bengal. The lumpen have their specially honed tactics to crush people's resistance and use State terror to throttle the Left. The BJP could then continue to ignore even judicial remonstrations and, in fact, further extend its mute support to the dictatorship of the lumpenproletariat in West Bengal; and be even more generous with the release of funds from the Centre so that the lumpen can have a whale of a time. In case the global economic crisis persists, India's ruling class would face increasing resistance from the suffering people in town and country and forcing it to rely more and more on lumpen support.

There could therefore still be a poser for Marxist theory. Notwithstanding their quick disintegration in France in the 1840s, the lumpenproletariat might remain in control in one little corner of the globe for an indefinite period and practice with impunity their fascist dictatorship. Would that call for a little footnote to Marx's assertion? We will have to wait and see.

STATESMAN, JUL 27, 2014

Cleanse the polity

One major argument of the lawyers' fraternity and in favour of the crime-tainted is that if a person facing criminal investigation is barred, it might lead to vindictive action in order to fix political opponents and dissidents within the party, ruling or in the opposition. This is quite possible in an unscrupulous polity. The remedy is to ensure

that all investigating agencies, not merely the CBI, are vested with a fair measure of autonomy in their functioning ~ G RAMACHANDRA REDDY

The recent Supreme Court judgment striking down Section 8(4) of the Representation of People's Act, 1951 has been hailed as historic in terms of cleansing the polity. The judgment bars convicts who have been in jail for two years, irrespective of the pendency of appeals. It also bars those who are facing criminal trials from contesting elections, regardless of whether a chargesheet has been filed by the police or whether the court has acted on the chargesheet. Thus all undertrial prisoners are disqualified except those who are freed on bail by the court. The verdict has shifted the responsibility of faster trials on to the accused and the defence lawyers; both will have to cooperate with the court. Undertrial prisoners, driven by a vested interest, often prolong the trials to the extent possible. The other feature of the order is that it attempts to address the baneful tendency of influencing witnesses and criminal trials, if a person happens to hold a powerful constitutional and legal post.

Though a landmark judgment in judicial history, it has been criticised on several counts. Justice M. Katju, former Supreme Court judge, has said that courts cannot formulate the law. The second point of criticism is that in an adversarial system of law, an accused is "presumed innocent" till proven guilty. This is a controversial issue as the order has disqualified not only the convict but also the undertrial. But I presume that the rule of presumption of innocence applies to criminal trials and convictions and is not applicable in case of quasi-judicial action of disqualification to contest elections or to continue as a member of the House or to get dropped from the Council of Ministers. A minister, for example, has no statutory right to hold office. It is at the discretion of the President/Prime Minister or Governor/Chief Minister.

The judgment has not taken into account the nature and gravity of offences. The law has been found to be wanting when it comes to prescribing deterrent punishment particularly in fiscal and tax cases, a sphere in which the high and mighty in society and the ruling class are known to violate the law with impunity. To this can be added the abuse of discretion by the trial courts in awarding the sentence. As often as not, this leads to lenient punishment ~ short of the two-year stipulation. This hurdle also can be overcome through the present judgment, which is definitely path-breaking. Not much can be expected from Parliament given its quota of the tainted. Truth to tell, it is not in a position to frame a perfect piece of legislation.

It would be useful to examine the constitutional provisions on qualification and disqualification. Articles 84 and 102 respectively deal with the two issues, pertaining to MPs. Articles 173 and 191 deal with qualification and disqualification of MLAs. The qualifications that have been listed pertain to citizenship, age and such other matters that are prescribed by law. The reasons for disqualification are: holding office of profit; unsound mind; undischarged insolvent; if one is not a citizen; and such other issues that

may be prescribed by Parliament. Thus the terms of disqualification listed in the Constitution are neither comprehensive nor rigorous. And the Constitution offers no prescription regarding disqualification to the State Assemblies. Regional parties, running governments in the states, can set their own terms of engagement.

The Representation of People's Act 1951 and periodic amendments had stipulated a minimum punishment of two years in case of disqualification, and such punishment could be upheld in the appellate courts. Section 8(4) of the Act was struck down by the Supreme Court and new criteria put in place.

While framing the Act, Parliament did not list "doing business of profit" ~ a road to riches ~ as a disqualification. Politicians became crony capitalists, combining political and economic power. It also failed to mention nepotism and favouritism as grounds of disqualification.

India has a long way to go before the polity is de-criminalised. It is not merely a case of two-year conviction and/or pending trial. The court "indictment" under Article 226 of the Constitution or Article 32 should also be part of the criteria for disqualification.

The Supreme Court has an important role in ensuring speedy trial of criminal cases. Article 145 of the Constitution provides for procedures and rules covering the entire gamut of trials, appeals, reviews, stay orders, grant of bail etc. The apex court can suitably frame the rules after a Presidential reference. At present, archaic rules often impede faster trials. The defence lawyers and the accused are the major beneficiaries of the system, such as it exists. Therefore, the judicial leadership needs to show vision and courage in expeditious disposal of criminal cases as the accused have the "right" to get a speedier trial. And that right should not be violated by the courts. I am, however, against new courts and increased strength.

One major argument of the lawyers' fraternity and in favour of the crime-tainted is that if a person facing criminal investigation is barred, it might lead to vindictive action in order to fix political opponents and dissidents within the party, ruling or in the opposition. This is quite possible in an unscrupulous polity. The remedy is to ensure that all investigating agencies, not merely the CBI, are vested with a fair measure of autonomy in their functioning. This ought to be combined with accountability for wrongdoings, such as motivated filing of FIRs and criminal investigations. If this comes through, the need for review of the present judgment gets weakened. At the same time, one should not forget that there are constitutional and legal remedies to quash motivated FIRs and investigations under Article 226 and Section 482 of Cr.P.C., 1973.

The writer is a retired Inspector-General of Police

PUBLIC SECTOR

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 30, 2014

Same individual can hold Chairman and MD posts in certain large public companies

K. R. SRIVATS

Large public companies can now appoint an individual as the Chairperson as well as Managing Director or chief executive officer at the same time.

This dispensation will be available for public companies with a paid-up capital of ₹ 100 crore or more and an annual turnover of ₹ 1000 crore or more, the corporate affairs ministry has said.

It will only be available for companies engaged in multiple businesses and have appointed a chief executive officer for each such business, an executive order issued by the Ministry said.

This would mean that large public companies with multiple businesses would not be governed by the new company law requirement of having different individuals for the positions of Chairperson, Managing Director or Chief Executive Officer.

The new company law-- which came into effect from April 1-- had stipulated that a company cannot appoint an individual to the post of Chairman as well as Managing Director at the same time.

However, this stipulation did not apply if the Articles of Association of a company explicitly provided for such an appointment. Also, it will not apply if the company concerned did not have multiple businesses.

The new company law also specified that this requirement will not be applicable for certain class of companies to be specified.

The Corporate Affairs Ministry has now specified the class of companies that will be exempt from the requirement.

“The latest Corporate Affairs Ministry move could be considered a corporate friendly measure”, S.N.Ananthasubramanian, practising company secretary, told Business Line.

Lalit Kumar, Partner, J Sagar Associates, a law firm, said that the corporate affairs ministry move will bring relief only to large public companies.

“Since the thresholds are very high, only large public companies will get the benefit of this exemption”, Kumar said.

It is very common in the public sector to appoint the same person as Chairman and Managing Director, at the same time. But critics argued that such an approach does not recognise the distinct roles that these posts carried.

To add to this is the concept of executive Chairman, which makes things sometimes awkward at the Board level, especially in a diversified company.

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 30, 2014
Recast approach, PM tells PSUs

The Prime Minister, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, has made it clear that while there would not be any blanket winding-up of Central public sector enterprises, the chief executives of these units will have to come forward with a plan of action specifying the areas where the Government's support is needed to make them stand on their own legs... He said that as far as the Government was concerned, there would neither be prejudices against the PSUs nor any permanent favour extended to them as the public sector must learn to move on its own steam.

'Economic policy thrust on poverty alleviation'

The new economic policy aims to move away from the protection of the industrial sector, which provides 20 per cent of the national income, so that resources can be provided for programmes that aim at alleviating poverty. The Union Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, said this at the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, while launching the bio-village project and releasing the book "Eco-Technology and Rural Employment"... Mass poverty could be eliminated by combining human knowledge with pro-poor, pro-nature and pro-employment actions

Opposition rejects Govt offer on action taken report

Major Opposition parties today rejected the Government's offer of expunging "offensive" words in the action taken report on the JPC findings in the securities scam and stuck to their demand that only complete withdrawal of the report coupled with action against Ministers indicted by the JPC would satisfy them. Janata Dal and BJP leaders at separate press conferences reiterated their party position saying the deadlock on the issue continued and their parliamentary parties would review their future strategy.

(This article was published on July 30, 2014)

TRANSPORT

HINDU, JUL 24, 2014

e-rickshaws are illegal, says Delhi Govt.

MOHAMMED IQBAL

THEIR FATE HANGS IN THE BALANCE: e-rickshaws on a Delhi road.

To clarify its stand by July 31 on how to regulate them

Contrary to the Union Government's stand in favour of validating e-rickshaws plying in large numbers in the Capital, the Delhi Government on Wednesday said their operation was "wholly unauthorised and illegal" under the law and their presence on the city roads posed a danger to public safety.

Delhi Chief Secretary S. K. Srivastava said in his reply to a writ petition in the Delhi High Court seeking regulation of e-rickshaws that the battery-operated rickshaws were "motor vehicles" under the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and no separate policy or regulation governing them could have been framed by the Delhi Government.

The Delhi Government's Transport Department has been impounding e-rickshaws and has also issued public notices and requested the Delhi Police from time to time for taking action against e-rickshaw operators, stated the affidavit filed by Mr. Srivastava through the Government's standing counsel.

Earlier in June, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari had announced at a rally of e-rickshaw owners and drivers here that the battery-operated rickshaws with motor power up to 650 watts would be considered non-motorised vehicles and would not be barred from operating. The Minister had stated that the Transport Department and traffic police would not challan e-rickshaws. These were to be regularised by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi by registering them with a fee of Rs.100. This would enable the e-rickshaw drivers to earn their livelihood, he had announced.

A Division Bench of the High Court, before which the matter came up for hearing on Wednesday, pulled up the Delhi Government for allowing "unregulated transport" in the city. The Court said the e-rickshaws could not be allowed to ply uncontrolled without licence, registration or insurance.

The Bench, comprising Justice B. D. Ahmed and Justice Siddharth Mridul, gave time to the Delhi Government till July 31 to clarify its stand on what it intends to do to regulate the plying of e-rickshaws. The Court asked how they were running on the city roads without complying with the rules and regulations.

When the petitioner's counsel pointed out that a couple of persons had died in accidents involving e-rickshaws, the Court expressed surprise over the fact that the e-rickshaw drivers were not booked despite accidents and people getting injured.

The Chief Secretary's affidavit was filed following the High Court order of May 21 this year asking for disclosure of circumstances in which e-rickshaws were allowed to ply in Delhi. The petition, filed by social activist Shahnawaz Khan, has sought regulation of e-rickshaws while pointing out that they were operated with four 12 volt batteries with power output of 650 to 850 watts.

The affidavit stated that the Delhi Government had stopped taking action against e-rickshaws after the Union Transport Minister announced a Deendayal e-rickshaw scheme in the rally and promised to change the laws pertaining to these vehicles in order to take them out of the ambit of the Motor Vehicles Act.

“Unscrupulous manufacturers and importers disguised their products as legal ones under the garb of exemption clause [in the MV Act]...The e-rickshaw models which were legally permissible have not been able to survive competition from the commercially viable imported e-rickshaws,” said the affidavit. The affidavit suggested that the petitioner implead the Union Road Transport Ministry as a necessary party in the case.

WOMEN

HINDU, JUL 24, 2014

Dial 119 to get 'Suraksha', Home Minister tells girls

THE HINDU Deputy chief Minister and Minister for Home Nimmakayala Chinna Rajappa launching Rajahmundry Urban Police Surveillance System in Rajahmundry on Wednesday. PHOTO: S. RAMBABU

Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister N. Chinna Rajappa has exhorted young girls and women to dial 119 toll free number to get immediate response from police as well as protection from eve teasers, rapists and other anti-social elements.

The novel mobile tracking system "Suraksha" was inaugurated by the Home Minister on Tuesday and it was designed and introduced by Rajahmundry Urban Superintendent of Police T. Ravikumar Murthy and Hyderabad-based Software Company Quadrivium.

Speaking on this occasion, the Home Minister said the mobile tracking system would be introduced in every district headquarters and towns in the State soon. He said Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu-led government accorded top priority to protection of women and orders would be issued to all the SPs to follow the model of Rajahmundry immediately for protection of women.

Addressing the gathering, SP Ravikumar Murthy has said "The software developed by Quadrivium will facilitate tracking of police personnel, transmission of messages and live pictures from the site at the click of a button."

According to Quadrivium managing director K. Dinesh, live streaming of video to the control station is done using the software. Besides, silent call from the mobile to transmit the audio to the control station is also part of the system. The application is based on java and web platforms and is designed to work on Android platform.

East Godavari ZP Chairman Namana Rambabu, Rajahmundry Mayor P. Ranani Sessa Sai, MLAs Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary, Akula Satyanarayana, and Pendurthi Venkatesh and OSD A. Ramadevi were among those present.