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## AGRICULTURE

STARESMAN, JUL 30, 2015

### **Global food shock**

**B K Mukhopadhyay**

A recent report portrays a chilling scenario, the cumulative impact of three disasters driven by climate change. The possible consequences are: global food shock, resulting in food riots; the ballooning price of basic crops; and significant losses in stock markets. The risk assessment report, produced by insurer Lloyd's of London - with support from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and vetted by academics from a number of institutions - shows how close humanity might be to a catastrophic collapse by the mid-century unless significant changes are made to curb global warming.

The scenario presented in the report examines what would happen if there were three simultaneous disasters - specifically a heat wave in South America, an explosion of windblown wheat stem rust pathogen across Russia, and a particularly strong El Niño southern oscillation cycle - all perfectly plausible phenomena given current climate trends. The impact of this would be enough to cripple global food security.

A model crafted by the Anglia Ruskin University's Global Sustainability Institute in the context of the report concludes that "In this scenario, global society essentially collapses [in 2040] as food production falls permanently short of consumption." But this forecast is based on a "business as usual" approach, one in which man-made climate change leads to a combination of increased flooding and extensive drought, with agriculture facing the prospect of functioning under water-stress conditions as early as 2025. However, if carbon emissions are slashed and agriculture adapts, this scenario does not have to play out.

A timely warning indeed!

As per latest assessments, global food production has been assessed to rise by 70 per cent by 2050 to cater for growth in the world's population of more than 30 per cent. Can we achieve the target? Global food security is one of the most pressing societal issues of our time. Though advances in agricultural technology and expertise will significantly increase the food production potential of many countries / regions, yet these advances will not increase production fast enough to meet the demands of the planet's even faster-growing human population.

What is the situation right now? Are we in the safe zone? Certainly not, and there is no question of complacency. What are the options and alternatives? Tinkering with the prevalent models can to an extent be effective... leaving the gaps uncovered.

Assistance to fight hunger has a vital humanitarian role to play in countries which require help, yet this is not a sustainable solution. One has to go deeper to explore how a food deficit country [e.g. Ethiopia, with more than 10 million people dependent on food assistance] can address its problems by relieving the food insecurity of other such countries.

It is a fact that population pressures will continue to tip the balance against proper land and water management in many developing countries. While agricultural production is critical for any form of sustainable future, focusing on the agricultural sector alone without regard for other important factors which influence food production is not the right course of action. But here lies the problem with the developing block. Population programmes require to be integrated with the overall development objectives and then be linked to other resources so that comprehensive development turns into reality.

With declining food production and resource degradation, the strategic plan has to be incorporated with population concerns [viz. population growth, distribution and rural-urban migration patterns incorporate population]. For that matter, the community development strategy, which integrates essential social services as well as production resources, is welcome.

In parallel, sustainable development strategies [encompassing soil erosion and impoverishment, deforestation, falling agricultural output, and poor water management] need to be streamlined and implemented. This needs to be coupled with rural agricultural extension schemes which provide credit, seeds, fertilisers and advice to poorer farmers. Adequate support has to be provided to research on the integration of traditional and emerging technologies for food production. Local knowledge ought not to be ignored.

The question of integration with external markets is important in order to encourage farmers to form cooperatives as a recognised means of accessing urban and export markets - a balance between marketable surplus and marketed surplus.

The G20 group of countries needs to prepare a realistic and achievable action plan to deal with the volatile behaviour of food commodity markets and the decision has to be taken as to whether biofuels (being a key driver of rising food prices) targets and incentives are

to be revised in a balanced manner and whether food export restrictions that destabilise markets should be permitted only in the last resort.

It is in a word, optimal resource management that is capable of increasing crop yields, preventing land degradation, while providing sustainable livelihoods for millions of rural poor. National population programmes, on the other hand, should include comprehensive and accessible maternal and child health care programmes and family planning services not only to reduce the size of families and improve the health and well-being of the entire community, but also increasing food production. There is need to ensure protection of the environment while easing the burdens of the poor.

FAO has rightly noted that it is not only financial resources that are needed. Beyond the factors that exacerbate the current crisis, there is a whole series of fundamental problems that need to be resolved, in particular how aid is channeled and how to make it reach small farmers effectively, as well as reform of the world food security governance system towards greater coherence in the action of governments and development partners, the share of national budgets dedicated to agriculture and private sector investment. “It is vital, particularly in times of crisis, that support to agriculture is not reduced. Only a healthy agricultural sector, combined with a growing non-farm economy and effective safety nets and social protection programmes will be sufficient to face the global recession as well as eradicate food insecurity and poverty.”

In order to avoid the disastrous consequences of widespread hunger and even starvation in the years and decades to come, a firm commitment is needed to increase crop yields of land area, the nutrients applied, and the quantity of water used. The positive impact of such efforts will considerably lessen the severity of the food shortage and lift hundreds of millions of people out of a state of hunger and malnutrition, thereby preventing widespread starvation, premature death and social unrest.

So, when about 870 million people currently suffer from hunger and chronic malnutrition, economic and financial crisis, the consequences of climate change, and the decrease in the amount of usable agricultural land worldwide, the situation is bound to worsen.

It is time to be realistic while planning for tomorrow.

## BACKWARD CLASSES

HINDU, JUL 24, 2015

### Constitutional conversations on Adivasi rights

KALPANA KANNABIRAN

A little used provision in the Constitution may hold the key to protecting the interests of Scheduled Tribes as they fight to hold on to their traditional lands

Even 67 years after Independence, the problems of Adivasi communities are about access to basic needs. These include, but are not restricted to, elementary education, community healthcare, sustainable livelihood support, the public distribution system, food security, drinking water and sanitation, debt, and infrastructure. For them, equality of opportunity remains largely unfulfilled. In this context, it is important to stress that the values of tribal culture are transmitted in a manner that protects the right of the bearers of knowledge to determine the terms of the transmission without exploitation or commodification. Nor can the Adivasis' unhindered access to land and forests, including full access to the commons, especially in scheduled areas, be understated. Tribal communities have, over the decades, witnessed the fragmentation of their habitats and homelands and the disruption of their cultures through predatory tourism. All this has left them shattered and impoverished. Entire communities across States have been dispossessed systematically through state action, and have been reduced from owners of resources and well-knit, largely self-sufficient communities to wage earners in agriculture and urban agglomerates with uncertain futures. Yet, we can scarcely forget that the rights of tribal communities in India are protected by the Constitution and special legislations.

### Rights enumerated

While most of these protections are available to groups named in The Constitution (Schedule Tribes) Order 1950, there are some tribal communities that fall within the categories of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) and some that don't fall into any of these categories. Within the category of Scheduled Tribes (ST), there are over 500 groups listed of whom roughly 70 are part of the sub-classification Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, a small cluster of groups that include the Jarawas of the Andaman Islands, the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and the Baigas of Chhattisgarh. These groups face an acute crisis of survival, evident in their rapidly dwindling numbers. Therefore, they are in need of special protection even within the larger ST category, protections in relation to non-tribal communities as well as in relation to other tribal communities. Notwithstanding these complex intersections and overlaps (and exclusions in some instances), tribal communities, especially the STs, are the subject of special constitutional attention.

The right of tribal peoples to development through pathways that affirm their autonomy and dignity, as set out in Article 21 and under Schedules V and VI of the Indian

Constitution, is often seen as the core of Adivasi rights. And indeed, they are. The oft-quoted *Samata* judgment of 1997, rich in its defence of the rights of Adivasi communities to their homelands, posits an inter-reading of Articles 14 (equality), 15 (non-discrimination), 16 (equality of opportunity), 17 (abolition of untouchability), 21 (life and liberty), 23 (right against exploitation) from the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Constitution and Articles 38 (securing a just social order), 39 (guiding principles of policy) and 46 (promotion of educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections) from the Directive Principles of State Policy.

The constitutional arguments in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh resisting the Polavaram dam centred on whether the state could alter (diminish) the boundaries of a scheduled area without presidential assent. Submergence, in fact, alters boundaries, causes disappearance of villages and village institutions, and renders people from these communities vulnerable through dispossession by displacement — all of which are the subject of special protections for the STs. The largest volume of litigation in scheduled areas has to do with non-tribal occupation of tribal land and the blatant derogation of land transfer regulation laws. Financial inclusion poses the third major problem: despite policy commitments to financial inclusion of vulnerable communities as a measure to lift them out of debt bondage and predatory money lending and usury, moneylenders continue to thrive in tribal areas.

### **Hidden provision**

It is in this overall context that I flag an unused constitutional provision as perhaps holding a key to the justiciable, mandatory protection of the interests of the STs as distinct from other marginalised groups.

Article 19 of the Constitution is commonly understood, through text and case law, as a provision that protects freedom of speech, expression, assembly, association, movement, residence and calling. The first clause of Article 19 reads as follows: 19(1) All citizens shall have the right (a) To freedom of speech and expression; (b) To assemble peaceably and without arms; (c) To form associations or unions; (d) To move freely throughout the territory of India; (e) To reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; and (f) omitted (g) To practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. Clauses 19 (2) to (4) set out the reasonable restrictions to speech, assembly and association in the interests of public morality, decency and integrity and sovereignty of the state — these aspects and their restrictions are what figure most often in animated fashion in debates around Article 19.

Clause 5 of Article 19 reads as follows: 19 (5) Nothing in sub clauses (d) and (e) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, *reasonable restrictions on the exercise of any*

*of the rights conferred by the said sub clauses* either in the interests of the general public or for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe (emphasis added).

In other words, an important part of Article 19 protections have to do specifically with protection of interests of STs (Clause 5) as distinct from other marginalised groups through limitations on right to freedom of movement [sub-cause 1(d)] and right to freedom of residence [sub-clause 1(d)]. This, I would argue, when read with existing protections (for instance as set out in Samata or similar cases) offers a core and express fundamental right protection to Adivasis (as distinct from legal/ statutory protection) from a range of state and non-state intrusions in scheduled areas as well as from the perennial threat of eviction of Adivasis from their homelands.

It is the interests of STs that are paramount in this fundamental right provision, which is presented importantly as a restriction on an enumerated right that is clear and specific — not a restriction of a general nature, namely, the “sovereignty and integrity of India” or “public order,” “decency” or “morality,” as is the case with the other constituent freedoms in Article 19.

Understanding the situation of tribal communities is key to understanding the Constitution, its framework and its possibilities in the fullest sense. Perhaps it is time to reinvigorate our reading of the Constitution in the troubled times we live in. We may find answers to other questions as well around an idea of justice that we grapple with every day.

(Kalpana Kannabiran is Professor and Director, Council for Social Development)

## CITIZENS CHARTER

TELEGRAPH, JUL 24, 2015

**Thinking from outside**

**Towards a citizens' charter for Bengal**

Prabhat Patnaik

When hoodlums beat up teachers of Calcutta University, and manhandle its vice-chancellor, one suddenly gets an idea of how low civic life has sunk in West Bengal. And if these hoodlums are actually students as they claim to be, then matters are infinitely worse. What is happening in West Bengal is not just a tragedy for West Bengal; it is a national tragedy. Bengal has for long been the beacon for the country as a whole, its vibrant and sophisticated cultural and intellectual life a source of illumination for all. A snuffing out of that life would be a national loss.

As a non-Bengali, I can vouch for it, having learnt my economics from an Amartya Sen and a Sukhamoy Chakravarty, having developed a taste for cinema through the works of a Satyajit Ray, a Ritwik Ghatak and a Mrinal Sen, and having been introduced to literature through a Rabindranath Tagore, a Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and a Manik Bandyopadhyay ( *via* my mother who knew the language and read avidly). For the good of the country it is essential that democracy and civility (the two are not contradictory, as is often made out) return to Bengal as early as possible.

Some would interject that the disintegration of social life in Bengal began even before its current political dispensation, indeed from the days when the Left was in power. To enter into a debate on this is, I believe, a waste of time, since what is important today is: what is to be done? The old *bhadralok* culture of Bengal is in tatters, which should not cause regret; the problem is that nothing has emerged to take its place. All the hallowed institutions have been undermined, but no new institutions have been innovated other than the panchayats of the early Left Front days (for whatever they are currently worth).

Much emphasis is placed these days, in the political circles, upon the need for a restoration of democratic life in Bengal. This is absolutely essential, but the democratic vision needs fleshing out. What it should mean, and what it should not, have to be thought out. Democracy for instance cannot mean the freedom of a *multiplicity* of hoodlum groups to tyrannize people as opposed to one single group; it must mean above all the putting in place of a set of institutions that can command popular acceptance and respect. The very programme of revival of democracy in West Bengal, in short, requires a more comprehensive agenda than the mere ending of the tyranny of ruling-party hoodlums. It requires a citizens' charter through which the people can recapture their enthusiasm for a creative democratic life.

Such a charter can be prepared, for widespread public discussion, by a group of thinking persons whose secular and democratic commitments are beyond doubt, but who are outside of the discipline of political parties (because being bound by party discipline would prevent them from giving free expression to their own considered views on

particular issues). West Bengal fortunately has many such persons: the names of Ashok Mitra, Shankha Ghosh, Shankar Sen, Amiya Bagchi and Ashok Nath Basu come readily to one's mind. The Left has to take the initiative to request such persons to constitute a group for preparing a charter of this sort. The Left must do so because it is potentially the most progressive force in the state; and it can realize its progressive potential precisely by taking such an initiative.

The Left, in short, must commit an act of self-negation of a sort it does not normally do: it has to take the initiative for getting for itself an agenda "from outside", which it would, of course, be under no obligation to accept but with which it must very seriously engage.

This, as I said, would be an unusual step for the Left. But we live in a world where bold and unusual experiments in democracy are being tried out: we have just had in Greece for instance, perhaps for the first time in history, a referendum among people on a matter of economic policy that bourgeois society insists on leaving to "technocrats" (which typically means representatives of finance capital). No matter what happens in Greece in the days to come, the very fact that the people gave their verdict on an economic policy measure (at the initiative of the Syriza government) constitutes a remarkably bold experiment in deepening democracy. Syriza may well betray the verdict of the people, but at its own cost.

The group I am proposing, I must emphasize, does not have to be representative of all political-ideological tendencies. The idea is not to find some lowest common denominator; the idea on the contrary is to present to the people a citizens' charter worked out by people of a certain political-ideological persuasion, which is broadly Left, on the basis of which they can be expected to emerge increasingly into playing a "subject" role. To take the Greek example again, Syriza did not just ask people to vote in a referendum; it specifically asked them to vote "no". It projected a position; and I am asking for such a projection of position that breaks from the current stasis. And I believe that the projection of such a position should come initially from a group of non-party persons with impeccable secular and democratic credentials.

The tendency among Left intellectuals, rightly, is to emphasize the structural obstacles to any basic change in social conditions. But even in the interstices of the existing structures certain important changes can be brought about, which, in turn, can then create the ground for other, more basic, changes. Even for revolutionaries, in other words, the path to the revolution must lie through a breathing of life - not in accordance with bourgeois perceptions, of course - into certain institutions that exist in a bourgeois society. A revolution, for instance, requires thought; and a society in which institutions of higher education are in a shambles, or communalized or commoditized, would find it harder to generate such thought, whence the need to re-invigorate them.

The citizens' charter I am talking about, therefore, must not confine itself merely to asking for basic structural changes. It must address immediate pressing problems of the state in a concrete manner, including suggesting transitional arrangements that make even the longer-term structural changes more concrete to visualize. Such a charter, for

instance, must address itself to issues like how to make educational institutions autonomous of political interference even while ensuring their accountability to society; how to ensure a minimum level of nutrition, healthcare, and education for every citizen; how to ensure that the children of the minority community do not remain confined in perpetuity to a ghettoized existence; how to break the stranglehold of the upper-caste elite in the social, cultural and intellectual life of the state; how to alleviate the problem of unemployment (even though it cannot be eliminated under capitalism); and so on.

Some amount of research involving *inter alia* the calculation of resource requirements and resource mobilization possibilities, would be needed for drawing up such a programme. Some funds would be needed for such research. These have to be raised neither from political parties, nor from big business (including the many endowments they have), nor from foreign sources, directly or indirectly. They have to be raised through voluntary contributions from the people.

Such a charter would also resolve one of the issues that is much discussed nowadays, namely what kind of alliances the Left should enter into in the coming elections. Any answer to this question within the terrain of the old politics would leave many people cold, even though they may be as eager as anyone else for a democratic resurgence of West Bengal. What is required is a change in the terrain of discourse itself. The Left should have no compunctions about entering into electoral arrangements with any political formation that accepts in substantial measure the citizens' charter, not necessarily the one prepared by the group itself, but the one that takes shape on the basis of public discussions and the Left's engagement with it.

A basic tenet of Marxism is that "theory" is brought to the working class from "outside", which is the rationale for the formation of working-class political parties. The Left, which provides theory from "outside" to the working class, has itself, however, always used some "outside" inputs: Lenin, for instance, had relied heavily on the works of Hobson and Keynes. The only new thing suggested here is that the Left should take the initiative in setting up an "outside" group.

The suggestion I am making is undoubtedly hazy. But reflection would show that not being hazy would defeat the very purpose of my suggestion.

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## CIVIL SERVICE

PIONEER, JUL 30, 2015

### GOVT GIRDS UP TO TACKLE BUREAUCRATS' RESPONSE

The AAP Government has directed all its Cabinet Ministers to attend weekly meetings of the heads of departments chaired by deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. This directive has come amid reports that the Government was getting a lukewarm response to several of its policy initiatives from the bureaucracy.

The weekly-meeting of the HODs had become a contentious issue in the recent past with the deputy Chief Minister deciding that he himself would chair these meetings. Earlier, these meetings used to be chaired by Chief Secretary to review the functioning various departments and ministries. Some IAS officers were reportedly not in favour of the deputy Chief Minister chairing their weekly meetings as they felt such a move would curtail their freedom to hold free and frank discussions on key issues.

“Officers cannot give their free and frank opinion in presence of their political bosses, whose priority is to fulfil the agenda of their respective parties,” a senior bureaucrat said.

Despite reservation from a section of bureaucrats, the deputy Chief Minister went ahead with his decision and started holding his weekly meetings on a regular basis. He even told his officers that they should be frank enough to discuss problems they had been facing in getting the key policies implemented in the city. He also made it clear that the weekly meetings should act as a catalyst to fast-track policy decisions.

Source in the Government said of late it was noticed that follow-ups were not been meticulously done on key policy initiatives. One of the reasons being cited for this was communication gap between the top bureaucrats and their respective ministers.

In an attempt to fast track policy implementation, the deputy Chief Minister has finally decided to call all the ministers to his weekly meetings so that the Government is able to implement its 70-point agenda in Delhi. “Once ministers and bureaucrats sit together, all loopholes can be rectified then and there itself. This will help the Government to speed up its works in different departments”, a senior official said.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 24, 2015

### Bureaucratic rejig: 36 new Additional Secretaries appointed

36 Joint Secretaries have been promoted as Additional Secretaries in different central government ministries as part of a major senior level bureaucratic reshuffle.

NEW DELHI: Gujarat cadre [IAS officer](#) GC Murmu, who is tipped to be next Director of Enforcement Directorate (ED), was among 36 Joint Secretaries who have been promoted as Additional Secretaries in different central government ministries as part of a major senior level bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the government on Wednesday.

Murmu, a 1985-batch IAS officer, has been made Additional Secretary in Department of Expenditure by upgrading the post of Joint Secretary held by him, an order issued by Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said. He is likely to be appointed as ED Director, a post which is vacant for about an year now.

Arun Goel, Joint Secretary (JS) in Department of Revenue, has been appointed as Vice Chairman of Delhi Development Authority.

Yogendra Tripathy has been appointed as Chairman and Managing Director of Food Corporation of India (FCI). Tripathy is presently working as JS in Department of School Education. Deepak Kumar, a 1984-batch IAS officer of Bihar cadre, has been appointed as Director General, Employees' [State Insurance Corporation](#).

IRS officer PK Dash, who was working as Director General in [Election Commission](#), has been appointed as Additional Secretary (AS) and Financial Adviser (FA) in Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, it said.

Senior IAS officer Nikhilesh Jha has been appointed as Mission Director, National Water Mission under the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.

Jha is presently serving in his cadre-Manipur.

Preeti Madan, an Indian Economic Service officer, working as JS in Ministry of Minority Affairs is new Member Secretary in National Commission for Women.

HINDU, JUL 24, 2015

### **Two-year childcare leave for women staff in J&K**

In a major welfare measure for women employees in Jammu and Kashmir, the State government on Thursday approved a two-year childcare leave for them.

A women employee could take up to 730 days of childcare leave during her entire service for taking care of her two eldest children, an official spokesman said.

He said the leave could be taken to look after children during illness or for their education or similar requirements.

The spokesman said that after approval by Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the Finance Department had issued the notification to this effect. During the leave, the employee shall be paid leave salary equal to pay drawn immediately before proceeding on leave.

The childcare leave could be combined with any other leave, the spokesman said. — PTI

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 24, 2015

**2 babus, KC Devasenapathi and Rohini Sindhuri lead the way on Swachh Bharat**

By [Vasudha Venugopal](#)

KC Devasenapathi and Rohini Sindhuri may have hit the headlines earlier for the wrong reasons but the two are among the district collectors identified by the Centre as exemplary performers in executing Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

NEW DELHI: KC Devasenapathi and [Rohini Sindhuri](#) may have hit the headlines earlier for the wrong reasons but the two are among the district collectors identified by the Centre as exemplary performers in executing Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiated by [Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#).

Dantewada collector Devasenapathi was given a warning for not being dressed in "formal attire" when Prime Minister Modi visited the Maoist-affected district in May. Sindhuri, on the other hand, saw her name being dragged into the alleged suicide of Karnataka IAS officer DK Ravi when it was reported that he had sent several messages to her phone before his death. But this didn't stop the two IAS officers from excelling at the central mission for cleanliness. "To make people listen to you, you have to listen to them," Devasenapathi told ET over the phone.

The 34-year-old officer, who hails from [Tamil Nadu](#), is busy travelling over 200 km on practically non-existent roads to the district, ensuring that the mobile 'swacch vans' he has designed with water jets and automated cleaners are taken to all 70 schools in the area to clean the toilets.

The pace of building toilets, key to ending the problem of open defecation, is slower in the states affected by Left-wing extremism, but Devasenapathi is among the few people who have managed to put the project on track, according to officials. "There are several challenges here but health and hygiene of people, especially children, is foremost priority. We are just trying," he said. What has also worked is the concept of 'swachhta chaupals' that collectors such as Devasenapathi have started, involving the villagers to encourage the building and usage of toilets by holding frequent talks for them.

The ministry of drinking water and sanitation is in the process of identifying the best movers of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, district collectors who are relentlessly using innovating ideas and persistent ways to drive home the message of sanitation in the country's darkest districts. For another one in the list, Sindhuri, the CEO of Mandya Zila Panchayat, Swachh Bharat was all about convincing people in the sugar belt that "sugar cane crops were not a natural barrier to open defecation".

## Clean-up Act at Grassroots

Dantewada collector KC Devase-napathi & Mandya (Karnataka) Zila Panchayat CEO Rohini Sindhuri are making efforts to make PM Modi's pet project a success



**IN NEWS FOR WRONG REASONS**

- **SINDHURI'S NAME** was dragged into the alleged suicide of Karnataka IAS officer DK Ravi
- **DEVAENAPATHI** was warned for not being dressed in "formal attire" when PM Modi visited the Maoist-hit district in May

**INNOVATIVE IDEAS**

- **DEVAENAPATHI** has designed mobile 'swachh vans' with water jets and automated cleaners
- **THEY ARE TAKEN** to all 70 schools in the area to clean the toilets
- **HE ALSO HOLDS** 'swachh choupals' where villagers are encouraged to build toilets

**SINDHURI SELLS** the idea of toilets to women by linking them to self-respect & necessity

**SHE HAS TAPPED** into 300 self-help groups run by women in the area & 1,500 milk cooperatives with high female population

**SHE HELPS** women access easy loans & urges them to use toilets

"In Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the sarpanch can tell villagers he won't step into houses without toilets and use that to encourage toilet usage but these tricks won't work in most places in South India. These places are more individualistic," said Sindhuri, talking passionately about her efforts to strengthen sanitation programmes in Mandya in Karnataka. Sindhuri said she sells the idea of toilets to [women](#) without linking them to hygiene but to self-respect and necessity.

"Gram panchayats were totally against the idea of toilets. Last year a woman was attacked by a dog, and a minor girl raped in this area when they ventured out at night to defecate. No woman wants to put her life to multiple risks every day," she said.

## COMMUNALISM

STATESMAN, JUL 24, 2015

**So much to do, yet hate on the agenda**

**Seema Mustafa**

Wonder when it will stop. Politics in the name of religion that leads to manipulation and death and destruction. Early this morning I got two messages, one from Jammu and Kashmir where communal clashes were reported from Rajouri on some excuse or the other. And the other, far more desperate, from Jamshedpur by people on the ground asking for help as the district authorities were not listening. Again communal tensions, with fear stalking all the residents.

It is difficult to understand - despite having covered all major communal riots - why the common person needs to kill in the name of religion. And why the faithful remain paranoid about the faith they follow, that they need to kill to protect what is really not their own. A large part of the answer lies in right-wing groups' ability to stoke fires through rumours, lies and distortions whereby the common person feels under siege from the 'other'. Reason and sense is overtaken by the rumours that precede, and have preceded, every single incident of communal violence in India. The trigger then becomes something as small as an altercation between two persons of different communities, as the stage of fear and conflict has been set over the preceding weeks with rumours of kidnappings, rape, murders and what have you.

There are reports from some part or the other of low-intensity violence, low in that the numbers killed are not sufficient to excite media attention, but definitely high insofar as fear and trauma is concerned. Properties are looted and burnt; people injured and threats and abuse lead to large-scale displacement. Muzaffarnagar set the trend last year, but since then there have been many such incidents of violence where villagers - largely Muslims - have fled for their lives. And the fact that the attackers now are more oft than not neighbours, makes it even more difficult for them to return to their homes for fear of renewed attacks.

The politicians are for the first time succeeding in turning neighbours against neighbours, and thereby destroying the harmonious structure of the villages of India that had resisted the spread of urban communalisation for all these years.

Nations like India are not like Israel or for that matter Pakistan. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution perhaps realised this better than others, and resisted attempts to

turn India into a monolithic theocratic state. The reason why India has held together has to do with the federal, tolerant, and rights-based structure of the Constitution and the initial thrust to build institutions that protected this. The country is diverse, and certainly not Hindu in the monolithic sense that the right likes to project it. The people thrive on these differences that the Constitution wove into a fabric of unity, and thereby turned into the strength of India. Efforts to divide - perhaps at the moment on religious grounds - will impact on unity per se, and flow into efforts to muzzle dissent, curtail 'differences' and impose a monolithic structure that will clash with the federal aspirations of the people of India.

Communalism, casteism and all such 'ism's based on hate and divisiveness cut into the basic unity of a nation, and more so in India that is really strung together with the federal doctrine of respect, dignity and tolerance. If the atmosphere is vitiated it will impact on all, as violence cannot be contained in a box and tends to flow out to impact, often even in unforeseen ways. To put it simplistically for reasons of space, it weakens nations and history has demonstrated this over and over again.

The minorities of India - both Muslim and Christian - are feeling insecure in the environment today. They join the Dalits who have been insecure even in Independent India that has brought in laws to deal with the stigma of untouchability, but has not been able to cut into this social scourge as effectively as it hoped. They also join the women, more so in north India who are discriminated against from even before they are born. Sexual harassment, molestation, incest, rape are all part of a young girl's life, more than perhaps society likes to admit, or is reported. The point is that there is unrest and frustration and unhappiness, and instead of dealing with it our governments are adding to it with new target groups, and/or an inability to deal with the societal evils with a determined hand.

Unrest in the border states has not eased. And poverty - despite the statistics, whatever these might be - remains intense and debilitating.

There seems to be so much to do to get India on track that one wonders at those who spend more time in spewing venom and hate than in dealing with the problems that face the citizens on a daily basis. Growth is not just statistics, or the rich getting richer; growth is all about parity, rights, justice as without this nations cannot be built.

The writer is Editor-in-Chief of The Citizen, a daily online newspaper.

## EDUCATION

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 30, 2015

### **Furnish details we seek or face aid cut: UGC to universities**

The universities have been asked to submit annual accounts, status of accreditation and statistics of students admitted below minimum qualification.

#### **Shikha Sharma**

Universities stand to lose up to 25 per cent of their annual grant-in-aid if they fail to provide required information to the University Grants Commission (UGC), according to a new regulation introduced by India's higher education regulator.

The new regulation, titled 'UGC Furnishing of Information by Universities — 2015' requires universities to furnish detailed information under 20 different heads to the body annually or before the UGC's specified deadline, failing which institutions could attract cut in grants or other punitive action.

"Failure to upload data or information on the All India Survey on Higher Education or for any other purpose for which UGC directs furnishing of data may entail reduction of up to 25 per cent of the annual grant-in-aid and other punitive action as the UGC or Central government may deem fit. Furnishing of inaccurate or wrong data or information shall attract similar punitive action," the regulation stated.

Apart from basic information — updated copies of acts, statutes and ordinances, rules for grant-in-aid to affiliated colleges, rules and reports of inspection of colleges, rules of recognition or affiliation of colleges, and total number of colleges recognised or affiliated to the university — universities must submit detailed information on grants received from UGC or Central agencies, scheme-wise annually, along with its position of utilisation of funds and status of compliance with various UGC regulations.

The universities have been asked to submit annual accounts, status of accreditation and statistics of students admitted below minimum qualification.

According to UGC officials, the government had sent rules for such a regulation to UGC in 2004, but no action was taken by the body. The information will be used for the All India Survey on Higher Education, officials added.

“This is the first time that the UGC has come out with such a comprehensive regulation. As the funding body, it has every right to know how the money allocated by it is being spent. Besides, it will also help UGC to take informed decisions about the varsities,” Indermohan Kapahi, member, UGC said.

While some teachers welcomed the move, others questioned the UGC’s intention. “With regulations like these, UGC is clearly overstepping its brief. It is yet another way for it to seek control of universities,” said Rajesh Jha, senior professor in the Delhi University.

**BUSINESS STANDARD, JUK 27, 2015**

**Subir Gokarn: Educational reach and grasp**

**Analysis of data from a recent NSS survey will provide significant inputs into education policy**

**Subir Gokarn**

Over the past few weeks, new data releases have provided a wealth of information about different aspects of the state of the country's development and the diversity of conditions across states. The Socio-Economic and Caste Census, which I wrote about in my previous column, is one of these. Two reports from the 71st Round of the National Sample Survey, carried out during January-June 2014 also add to the data pool. One of these deals with household behaviour and expenditure on health services, while the other covers education. This column provides perspectives on some of the findings of the education survey.

The education survey covered about 66,000 households across the country, of which about 37,000 were rural. It sought information about standard indicators relating to institutional affiliation, attendance, access to incentives such as meals and scholarships and so on. Three indicators, which were of particular interest to me under the "reach and grasp" motif, were physical access, use of supplementary services - private coaching - and access to and ability to use computers and the internet.

I take it as given that, other things being equal, physical access to a school is a significant determinant of whether kids enrol and attend regularly. Minimising travel distance, time and effort required must be a key education policy objective. For many rural households, presumably, there is little room for choice between schools; it is only a question of whether it is physically feasible to attend. Urban households are more likely to have choices, but have to take quality and cost differences into account.

On the physical access criterion, there is both good news and not-so-good news. In rural areas, for the country as a whole, 94 per cent of households had access to primary school facilities (Classes 1-4) within 1 km and all households had access within 2 km. However, there was a sharp drop-off in access to upper primary (Classes 5-8) and, further, to secondary schools (Classes 9-12). Only 67 per cent of households had access to upper primary schools within 1 km. Of course, older kids can physically handle longer commutes; from this standpoint, over 97 per cent had access within 5 km. At the secondary level, only 37 per cent had access within 1 km, while 12 per cent had to send their kids to schools over 5 km away.

There is considerable variation across states on this parameter. Hilly and relatively sparsely populated states, of course, have lower densities. Of the larger states, Telengana has 100 per cent access to primary schools within 1 km, while, interestingly, Kerala reached only 62.5 per cent. Local conditions, including transport services obviously matter. It is also logical to expect a change in the location pattern as kids move from lower to higher segments. However, perhaps we should be thinking of location and access benchmarks for rural schools, which minimise the adverse impact of difficult access on enrolment and attendance. The larger context in which this issue becomes important is the sharp drop-off in enrolment between primary and secondary schools - almost 30 percentage points. How much of a factor is physical access in this transition?

As might be expected, the access problem is much less significant for urban households.

Ninety-two per cent have access to primary schools, 83 per cent to upper primary schools and 73 per cent to secondary schools within 1 km of their residence. Here, the issue is of quality and cost. Parents need to have a simple and transparent quality and cost metric to be able to base their decision on and regulators need to monitor and enforce some basic quality standards.

The second indicator that caught my eye was the prevalence of demand for private coaching. We all have our prejudices about private coaching. Is it a necessary evil or a legitimate substitute for parental and family supplements? Whatever one may see it as, the fact is that it is costly and a source of iniquity across households. Be that as it may, the survey shows, as might be expected, that there is an increase in usage as kids grow older and there is a persistent gap between boys and girls. In the primary segment, 23 per cent of boys and 20 per cent of girls across combined rural and urban households use private coaching. The proportion increases to 28 per cent and 25 per cent in the upper primary segment and 38 per cent and 35 per cent in the secondary segment.

Here again, there are some striking variations across states. In West Bengal, 71 per cent of boys and 63 per cent of girls in primary school rely on private coaching. By contrast, in Uttar Pradesh, only 12 per cent of boys and nine per cent of girls use coaching at this level. Does this reflect different aspirations? Or, differences in the quality of the education system? Each interpretation of these variations will have its own policy implication.

The third indicator that I think deserves deep scrutiny is digital access. We have, of course, separate estimates of telecom connectivity and smartphone usage, which are shaping the larger debate on delivery of benefits. This survey focus provides estimates on household possession of computers and, besides this, internet access for at least one member of the household who is above the age of 14. Six per cent of rural households and 29 per cent of urban households possess computers. Not surprisingly, the less affluent states typically have penetration lower than the national average. On the internet access parameter, the picture is a little more comforting; 16 per cent of rural households and 49 per cent of urban households meet this criterion of access.

From the perspective of using technology to improve access and quality of education, these numbers suggest that it is going to be a long haul. However, this should not deter

experimentation and scaling in areas in which penetration is reasonable. Above all, providing computer access to as many schools as possible is imperative.

As the government works its way through to a new education policy, it must draw upon objective analysis of these data as well as the wealth of other evidence on what works and what doesn't that is available. Of all aspects of public policy, the costs of being wrong on education will be both high and persistent across generations.

The writer is director of research, Brookings India and former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India. The views are his own.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUL 24, 2015

**DoPT red flags Smriti Irani's choice for CBSE head; raises queries on Satbir Bedi**

By Anubhuti Vishnoi

Bedi, a joint secretary in HRD ministry's School Education Department, is holding additional charge of CBSE chairman at present.

NEW DELHI: The Smriti Irani-led HRD ministry's top choice for the job of [Central Board of Secondary Education](#) (CBSE) chairman has run into trouble with the Department of Personnel & Training, raising the possibility of a further delay in appointing the chief of the body which has remained headless since December 2014.

The DoPT has raised a number of queries regarding Satbir Bedi, the candidate proposed by the HRD ministry, and sent the file back to the ministry. The DoPT raised queries to Bedi's candidature citing possible ineligibility as per the criteria, especially the requirement of three years of experience in educational administration, officials said. The DoPT is also learnt to have raised the issue of the complaints received in the ministry regarding the appointment process.

Bedi, a [joint secretary](#) in HRD ministry's School Education Department, is holding additional charge of CBSE chairman at present.

A search-cum-selection committee set up by the ministry had proposed Bedi's name as the top choice for the post of CBSE chairman.

While the panel of names shortlisted by the committee was sent to the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, the DoPT has now sent back the file raising queries and seeking many clarifications on Bedi's eligibility. The DoPT has pointed to a mismatch between the eligibility criteria spelt out in the advertisement put out by the government and the recruitment rules for the CBSE Chairman's post. "The file has been sent back to the HRD ministry. It is now for them to take further action," DoPT spokesman KTS Dhatwalia said in response to queries by ET.

HRD ministry spokesman [Ghanshyam Goel](#) said his ministry had no information regarding the matter. "The officials concerned have informed that they have no knowledge yet if the file is back or not," he said.

Bedi refused to comment on the issue. As per the ad put out by the ministry, government officials holding analogous post are eligible for the post but at least three years of experience in educational administration at a senior level of grade of director onwards is considered "essential", while five years of experience in education or educational administration is "desirable".

## EMINENT PERSONALITIES

ASIAN AGE, JUL 28, 2015

### **Former President APJ Abdul Kalam dies suddenly in Shillong**

**Last moments. Former President APJ Abdul Kalam collapses at the IIM Shillong where he had gone to deliver a lecture.**

### **7-day national mourning**

Former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, otherwise known as India's "missile man", died on Monday evening hours after he collapsed during a public lecture at the Shillong IIM. He was 83, and would have been 84 in October.

The government has indicated national mourning will be declared for seven days. Both Houses of Parliament are likely to make obituary references Tuesday and adjourn as a mark of respect to his memory.

Kalam was confirmed dead around two hours after being wheeled into the ICU of Bethany Hospital in critical condition after he collapsed at around 6.30 pm. Doctors at the hospital who attended him said Kalam had a cardiac arrest during the lecture and was rushed to the hospital, where he was put under observation in the ICU. However, he could not be revived.

Kalam had been a guest faculty member at IIM Shillong for the past few years. He was delivering a speech on "Creating a Liveable Planet" on Monday evening when he collapsed. Meghalaya governor V Shanmughanathan, who rushed to the hospital on hearing the news, said Kalam died at 7.45 pm. Doctors from the Army Hospital and North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences also rushed to Bethany Hospital.

Meghalaya chief secretary P.B.O. Warjiri told reporters at the hospital that he had spoken to Union home secretary L.C. Goyal, and that the necessary arrangements would be made to fly Kalam's body from Guwahati to New Delhi on Tuesday morning.

President Pranab Mukherjee, vice-president Hamid Ansari, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders across party lines condoled the former President's demise. President Mukherjee said Kalam would forever be known as a "People's President", while Mr Modi described him as a "great scientist, a wonderful President and above all an inspiring individual" and said he played the role of a "Margdarshak". Remembering his many interactions with the former President, Mr Modi said he "always marvelled at his intellect, learnt so much from him". Finance minister Arun Jaitley said the nation had lost its "ideal citizen".

Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, a recipient of the Bharat Ratna, became the 11th head of state and occupied the post from 2002 to 2007, but lack of a consensus denied a second term in office for a man who came from outside the political spectrum. He was born in Rameswarama, Tamil Nadu, on October 15, 1931, and was a bachelor.

An aeronautics engineer from Madras Institute of Technology, Kalam was considered the brain of India's missile programme, and as chief scientific adviser to the Atal Behari Vajpayee government was also instrumental in the Pokhran nuclear tests of 1998.

As President, Kalam utilised any opportunity to address students, especially schoolchildren, asking them to dream big so that they became achievers in life. He was a keen veena player and was deeply interested in Carnatic music.

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 29, 2015

**A master of men and matters**

S SUNDARRAJAN

**Igniting young minds Always the teacher T VIJAYA KUMAR**

APJ Abdul Kalam had a vision for India, and was on a mission to make leaders of the nation's youth

I worked with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam during three phases of his mission. The first phase was for making India technologically self-reliant. I had extensive interactions with him during this phase.

He became our director when motivation level in the organisation was very low. This was because everybody had spent around seven years to reverse engineer an extension surfaced air missile, only to have the programme get shelved, since the system developed was obsolete. With the entire team becoming jobless, the members were highly frustrated.

Dr Kalam conducted a series of meetings and integrated all sections of society and engineers to a common goal of missile development. His revolutionary steps to introduce concurrency in the programme — setting up production facilities along with development activities — brought down the project schedule.

He established concurrency and a total indigenous approach from design to production, and raised programmes like Prithvi, Agni and others to the pinnacle of success.

Another aspect was his technological leadership. Being a system specialist, he had the capacity and capability to understand inter-disciplinary issues and push the programmes forward. His techno-managerial leadership in handling multiple programmes provided him a strong base in the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), leading to his elevation as Secretary to the Government of India.

**Human touch**

My interaction with him was extensive during this phase. I could see him handling personal indifference and different aspirations of participating teams with great skill and a human touch.

Whenever there were instances of failure, he was at our back, providing encouraging words. Wherever we succeeded, he made it a point to project us to the forefront. During conversations, he used to hear the views of everybody and generally his decisions were not biased.

He totally changed his role when he became President of India. His interests were focused on society and developing a vision for the nation. By using his position, he could influence many major society-oriented decisions. The concept of PURA — providing urban resources in rural areas — was his favourite subject for bridging the gaps between rural and urban populations.

He had excellent interaction with international leaders and had the courage and conviction to communicate the technological strength of the country to them. I could see his role changing to leadership for social development. He could handle this without mixing politics. His contribution as leader of societies without cultural and political borders elevated him to international recognition.

During this period, he dramatically switched his focus to the children and youth of the country. He was very firm that India could become a superpower by transforming the approach and character of current-day students. He made it a point to extensively cover every State, trying to communicate with children. His leadership position in this was really significant and had a profound impact. Young children easily responded to his ideas of Vision 2020. I could sense his interest and drive to become a leader of the youth.

Dr Kalam was a consummate leader. Beginning with leadership in technology, he moved to leadership in society and finally focused on youth leadership.

**Shining a light**

The future of the country depends on these three factors. While Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders provided leadership for India's independence, Dr Kalam provided the leadership for India to become a superpower. His vision and mission are clear and he has effectively encouraged all the key players who are going to take care of the future.

The fact that the youth of the country had accepted him as a great leader was visible to all.

I am sure this revolution will grow much stronger in the years to come and place our country at the top. When I was talking to students today, I mentioned to them that the most fitting way to remember him would be by becoming individual leaders and influencing thousands of youth over the next decade for technological and social

development. These students and youth are the flag-bearers who will transform Kalam's vision to reality.

The writer is the director of the National Institute of Technology, Trichy. As a senior DRDL scientist, he was closely associated with Dr APJ Abdul Kalam on the missile project

## FINANCE

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 30, 2015

### **A code too soon**

This is not the time for comprehensive financial sector legislative reforms. Fix problems through institutional changes.

### **Usha Thorat**

What is now universally accepted is that central banks must have a major and dominant role in systemic risk management, even if they are not designated as macro-prudential regulators. (Illustration by: C R Sasikumar)

Both the Union finance minister and minister of state for finance have come out with strong statements that the draft Indian Financial Code (IFC), based on the report of the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (FSLRC), is only an input into the government's final decision. If that is so, one wonders who is responsible for the revision in the draft IFC from the original version.

The public debate over the draft, as reflected in the media over the last few days, and the view expressed almost universally that the RBI governor's powers in monetary policy should not be clipped are encouraging. One hopes that other sections of the code will also be debated.

First, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). Ultimately, the RBI is responsible for price stability as per the agreement between the central bank and the government and this is also incorporated in the draft IFC. But the nuance of the objective is changed to "price stability while striking a balance with the objective of the Central government to achieve growth." While a committee approach to decide on monetary policy is recognised, an MPC where the majority will be external members appointed by the government is not in keeping with the principle of separating the monetary authority from the sovereign. One also wonders whether there is any other country where the central bank does not have its

own standalone legislation recognising its unique role as the issuer of currency and lender of last resort.

Second, banking regulation. It is good that the draft code has provided for banking regulation and supervision to continue to be with the RBI, as the original code had envisaged a fully unified financial agency with the RBI having a temporary role in banking regulation. The new draft IFC reiterates that all other non-bank credit institutions will be under the financial agency. Such a move would lead to a fragmentation in credit-regulated policies and give rise to regulatory arbitrage, which itself can seriously undermine financial stability. Globally, the Basel approach is that banking regulation should also apply to the group/ holding company, and not the bank alone. The banking regulator needs authority to exercise oversight over the banking group/ conglomerate, in which there may be entities such as insurance companies, AMCs, pension funds. There should be a provision for this in the IFC.

Third, systemic risk regulation. What is now universally accepted is that central banks must have a major and dominant role in systemic risk management, even if they are not designated as macro-prudential regulators. In the US, once the Financial Stability Oversight Council has identified a systemically important financial institution, the ongoing regulation and supervision are the Federal Reserve's responsibility. In the UK, the Bank of England is specifically designated as the macro-prudential regulator. Globally, systemic risk and its measures are "works in progress" and it is much better that the Financial Stability Development Council continues in its present institutional form. The draft code restricts the universe of systemic risk tools to just three, but there can be many more and some are evolving. Moreover, the response time for introducing these measures needs to be very short, as there can be anticipatory action. Allowing 90 days for

a response from the regulator to proposals from the systemic risk committee for changes in the loan-to-value (LTV) or income-debt instalment ratio seems ridiculous.

Fourth, capital controls. This is the area where the new draft code has travelled a long distance from the original draft contained in the FSLRC report. Fortunately, the rather odd suggestion of entrusting control of inflows to the government and outflows to the RBI has been dropped. The dissenting members of the FSLRC had given cogent reasons why the RBI and the government need to be involved in deciding on capital controls, as is the practice now. This has served us well and enabled us to deal with many a crisis, including the Asian crisis and the global crisis.

Fifth, public debt management. The draft IFC envisages a Public Debt Agency (PDA) in which there will be four executive members chosen by the selection committee for a period of five years, three members, one each, nominated by the government, the RBI and a state government (by turn). Since this is a matter too important to be left to just financial market professionals selected by an external committee, it is best that the PDA, if separated, functions with officials and staff from the RBI and the finance ministry familiar with debt management. As the PDA gains experience as a separate entity, the process of selecting executive members from the wider market can commence. There seems to be no particular merit in transferring the registry and depository functions currently undertaken by the RBI to the agency or to depositories. In fact, the present arrangement, apart from being safe, low-cost and efficient, also provides the financial system the convenience and comfort of finality of settlement in central bank money, considered best practice.

Sixth, the regulation of money, forex and government securities markets, and related derivatives. The exchange rate and interest rates are not fully market-determined. A high

combined debt and fiscal deficit imply the SLR cannot come down much in the near future. The impact of volatile capital flows on forex and government securities markets is well known and needs a multitude of tools to manage them. Hence, it is necessary that the RBI have a role in the regulation of these markets. In case of exchange traded products, there could be concurrent regulation by the RBI and the financial agency.

Seventh, the payments system. The RBI has been given jurisdiction only over systemically important payments systems (Sips). A large number of innovations are happening in the retail payments systems that have system-wide implications, and may not qualify for the Sips. Again, this is a new and growing area the implications of which, for monetary policy and financial sector regulation, are not fully clear. Providing a means of payment is akin to currency and its oversight is best left with the RBI.

To sum up, the global crisis has taught us that the thinking on an optimal policy and regulatory framework for the financial sector is still emerging. What is, however, clear is that governments and central banks have had to pay a heavy price for rescuing the financial sector because of the excesses in both bank- and market-dominated financial systems — ultimately, at the cost of public welfare. Hence, this is not an opportune time for comprehensive legislative reforms. Instead the focus should be on fixing problems through institutional changes and making legal changes only where required.

The writer is a former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

## FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

BUSINESS STANDARD, JUL 24, 2015

**Curtailing RBI Governor's veto powers is another flash point between RBI & Govt  
Urjit Patel panel wanted all members to be appointed by RBI  
Manojit Saha**

The composition of the monetary policy committee (MPC) –**as suggested by the revised draft Indian Financial Code** – could be another flash point between the country's central bank and the government as it suggested majority of the members to be appointed by the latter. This is in contrast with the **Urjit Patel** committee recommendation – a panel which was set up by Reserve Bank of India – that suggested three out of five members will be from the central bank and all of them will be appointed by the central bank.

The monetary policy committee will be the decision making body on the **interest rate** stance.

The revised draft IFC, that was released by the government yesterday, suggested a 7 member monetary policy committee, headed by the **RBI** governor, who will have the casting vote in case of a tie while taking the decision on interest rate movement. However, the panel suggested only two members (excluding RBI governor) will be from RBI – one will be nominated by RBI board and the other by the governor. The other four members will be appointed by the government.

The Urjit Patel committee had cited examples to show that the government does not have representation in the MPC in most countries, except in Colombia, Guatemala and the Philippines.

The Patel committee had suggested that RBI governor will be the Chairman of the MPC, the deputy governor in charge of monetary policy will be the vice chairman and the executive director in charge of monetary policy will be a member. “Two other members will be external, to be decided by the Chairman and Vice Chairman on the basis of demonstrated expertise and experience in monetary economics, macroeconomics, central banking, financial markets, public finance and related areas,” the committee said. If the revised IFC draft becomes a reality, then the central bank could lose significant power to decide interest rates it will be a minority.

The government, on the other hand, had argued that, majority of the members cannot be from the central bank as they would not like to contradict the government, openly in a meeting.

The composition of the MPC could be another area of tension between RBI and the government. Their relationship between the two has been uneasy in recent times, particularly, when the finance ministry wanted to separate debt management function from RBI. The move was later postponed by the government following the central bank's reservation.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JUL 27, 2015

**Editorial: Rubber-stamp Rajan**

**Why have an RBI Governor if he can't even fix rates?**

This newspaper differed with the central bank when it plumped in favour of inflation-targeting, and argued that stimulating growth was also a vital [RBI](#) objective. Matters got worse when RBI opted for CPI-based inflation-targeting since CPI is heavily influenced by food which is driven by both short-term and supply-side issues that interest rates cannot control. Yet, it was always understood that rate-fixing was an RBI prerogative since that is where the specialists were, it could not be seconded to the finance ministry where, often enough, political considerations come into play. It was in this context that there was a level of comfort with the Urjit Patel Committee which suggested a 5-member monetary policy committee (MPC) with 3 members from RBI—the Governor, the Deputy Governor and Executive Director in charge of monetary policy—and 2 external candidates nominated by the central bank; and in case one member was absent, the Governor was to have the casting vote.

Things began to look worrying when the FSLRC recommended a 7-member MPC with just 2 RBI members and 5 external ones. Of the external ones, 2 would be appointed in consultation with RBI and 3 others solely by the government—while the RBI Governor would have a veto in the FSLRC model, this would be under extreme circumstances and would have to be accompanied by a written explanation. The draft Indian Financial Code

(IFC) takes this process of marginalising RBI even further. The RBI Governor no longer has a veto power, and just 3 of the 7 members will be from the central bank—the other 4 will be nominated by the central government. Giving the Governor a casting vote in case there is a tie sounds a great deal, but with the majority of MPC members nominated by the government, this amounts to little. If RBI is mandated with the task of targeting inflation, it must have the freedom to use all tools at its disposal in the manner it feels best. While it is important RBI hear more voices on inflation, interest rates and economic growth, the central bank cannot be hemmed in by being compelled to accept views it may not agree with.

Many will argue the model resembles that of the US Fed where the chairman also does not have a veto power. The problem with this comparison, however, lies in the manner in which the other members on the committee are selected. In the US, there is a process of confirmation by the legislature, it is not as simple as the government of the day just nominating someone. Two, with very long tenure, the members on the committee tend to have a different approach as compared to people who are appointed for short durations—India's history with political appointees on various boards, including those of banks, has in any case been an unhappy one. In the UK, similarly, the majority on the monetary policy committee are appointees of the Bank of England. A diminished role for the central bank, one of the few institutions whose credibility has not been tarnished, serves no one's interests.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

HINDU, JUL 24, 2015

**All form, little substance**

SRINATH RAGHAVAN

The real test of a foreign policy is coherence of design, consistency in execution and efficacy in outcomes. A comparison of the outcomes secured by this government with those achieved since the late 1990s shows that the current foreign policy looks ordinary.

In two recent speeches, the Foreign Secretary, Dr. S. Jaishankar, has enunciated the strategic underpinnings of India's foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The speeches are characteristically incisive, thoughtful and provide useful insights into New Delhi's evolving approach to international relations. Nevertheless, since these speeches were public interventions, a few thoughts may be worth bouncing off their polished surface.

Srinath Raghavan

The burden of the speeches was to flag apparently far-reaching shifts in India's approach to foreign affairs. Even while the Foreign Secretary conceded some continuity with the past, he insisted that we are witnessing "different times". A simple "smell test" of the diplomacy of the last year would point to this "reasonably clear conclusion". Foreign policy under Mr. Modi is marked by "greater confidence, more initiative, certainly stronger determination" as well as a series of innovative approaches.

### **Engaging with the neighbourhood**

The Foreign Secretary rightly held that Mr. Modi's decision to invite South Asian leaders for his swearing-in, in May 2014, heralded a "big shift" in India's policy towards its neighbours. By engaging intensively with the neighbourhood, Mr. Modi has indeed managed to project India's leadership without ruffling sensitivities in the region. In particular, his engagements with Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan have given a fillip to plans for subregional connectivity and integration.

That said, our relationships with the Western neighbours leave much to be desired. It is not surprising that the Foreign Secretary slurred over Pakistan in his speeches. Here, the government has struggled to reap dividends of the "big shift" — largely because it shifted away from its original position. By calling off talks last year and by taking the initiative to resume them now, the government has showcased its inability to craft a sustainable approach to Pakistan. The position with Afghanistan is worse still. Repeating platitudes about "Afghan-led reconciliation process" and "internationally accepted red-lines" is unlikely to get us very far. In reality, there is an ongoing Pakistan-facilitated process to arrive at a settlement with the Taliban. More importantly, this process has the approval of the United States, China and Russia. The limitations of our policy towards Afghanistan

over the past year are amply clear — not least in the manner in which traditional partners like Russia have edged closer to the Pakistani position.

Looking beyond the subcontinent, the Foreign Secretary underlined the government's pattern of engagement with various other regions. The Prime Minister's "integrated" tours to countries in East Asia, the Indian Ocean and Central Asia are evidently indicative of a different approach — one that also seeks to exploit the openings that may be offered by local balances of power. The prime ministerial itineraries certainly lend credence to this claim. And the outreach to some neglected countries is to be welcomed.

But is there a novel strategic approach at work? Take the case of the Indian Ocean region. The Foreign Secretary stated that there is a new, integrated approach in place — with emphasis on "exchange of information and coastal surveillance, building of infrastructure and strengthening of capabilities".

### **Assessing policy**

In fact, each of these initiatives began under the previous government. For instance, the maritime domain awareness systems inaugurated during Mr. Modi's visit to Seychelles, in March 2015, were the outcome of an older initiative encompassing several Indian Ocean countries. As for beefing up our maritime capabilities, it may be worth pointing out that this year's Budget actually cut the Indian Navy's share of defence allocation to 13.5 per cent from 16 per cent in the last year. Perhaps the real problem of integration lies within the Government of India.

Beyond such quibbles, there is the larger question of how to assess our foreign policy. A "smell test" can hardly suffice. The real test of a foreign policy is coherence of design, consistency in execution, and efficacy in outcomes. The last in particular is the litmus test.

Compare the outcomes secured by this government with those of the National Democratic Alliance government under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the first United Progressive Alliance government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Over a similar period in office, Mr. Vajpayee tested nuclear weapons, travelled to Lahore, repelled Pakistani aggression in Kargil, and opened new avenues in our relationship with the U.S. and China. In the same time frame, Dr. Singh concluded the agreement on parameters to settle the boundary with China, announced the nuclear deal with the U.S., and made headway with Pakistan in backchannel talks. By this standard, the present government's foreign policy looks ordinary. To be sure, the government has a long way to go and there is no reason to judge it by the performance so far. Still, the government might wish to refrain from talking up its own policies.

## **Bonhomie and the results**

Talking up, however, seems to be an integral part of its conception of foreign policy. Indeed, this was a running theme through the various innovations pointed out by the Foreign Secretary. “Personal chemistry” has apparently emerged as a “powerful tool in our diplomatic kit”. There is a measure of truth to this. The Prime Minister does seem to have a personal affinity for leaders such as the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. In other cases, as with the American and Chinese leaders, there was more of orchestrated bonhomie. In any event, the role of personalities in diplomacy can hardly be denied.

Yet, as the British diplomat Harold Nicolson observed, diplomacy is ultimately “disagreeable business”. The mere fact of leaders getting along well can hardly ensure convergence in policies and actions. The Foreign Secretary’s claim that Mr. Modi’s visit to China, in May 2015, resulted in the “world’s most powerful selfie” — when Mr. Modi posed with China’s Premier Li Keqiang — may be true; but it can scarcely disguise the fact that the Chinese refused to accede to Indian wishes on such key issues as clarification of the Line of Actual Control or increased market access. The number of followers on Twitter or Facebook is no measure of real power or influence. There is a danger here of getting trapped in a social-media echo chamber of tweets and posts, “likes” and “favourites”.

## **Creating narratives**

This is equally true of the government’s emphasis on creating narratives about India and coining neologisms. The Foreign Secretary was perceptive in highlighting the role of strategic narratives. The importance of moulding opinions held by a variety of constituencies and actors is undeniable in contemporary international politics. Narratives differ from ordinary stories in that they deal with the way in which issues are framed and responses suggested.

A successful narrative will enable the consumer to distinguish between important and trivial issues, good and bad news. It will suggest ways of piecing together seemingly disparate developments while disentangling others. The fundamental requirements of any strategic narrative are appropriateness and credibility. The government seems a bit oblivious to both. The notion that highlighting India’s role in the First World War buttresses its demand for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council falls short on the first criterion. Making large claims for a “Neighbourhood First” policy while eliding the missteps on Pakistan or Afghanistan fails the second criterion. Moreover, communication is currently too focussed on personality and style as opposed to ideas and outcomes.

The Foreign Secretary has coined his own neologism in these speeches: India as a “leading power”. Hitherto, he argued, India had remained content to be a “balancing power”. It is perhaps time to take the lead on global issues and demonstrate our willingness to shoulder global responsibilities. This seems unexceptionable, though his suggestion that in the past India had been “neutral or risk averse” is a gross misreading of our diplomatic history.

So far, the real constraint on such ambitions has been weak state capacity. This affects both our ability to grasp the big strategic picture and our ability to get the nuts and bolts right. On the former, we only need to look closely into the Ministry of External Affairs’ flawed assessment of the prospects of a nuclear agreement between Iran and the United States. Equally striking is the absence of any coherent response by the government to the major changes sweeping the global economic landscape: the mega-regional trade deals driven by the U.S. and the ‘One-Belt One-Road’ envisioned by China. On the latter, think only of our inability to deliver on any number of regional promises of cooperation and connectivity. Instead of focussing on flaky “soft power” initiatives such as Yoga or Buddhism, the government should aim to get its institutional muscle into shape. Otherwise, our partners may come to see us not as a “leading” power but as a misleading power.

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## PARLIAMENT

STATESMAN, JUL 28, 2015

### **Wash-out, so what?**

Just about every review or commentary on Parliament having been rendered non-functional in the first week of its current session - and probably even beyond - used the term “wash-out”: possibly a reflection on its being the monsoon session that has “progressed” beyond the “stormy” description. Yet a few steps across the political perimeter and the media maze on its fringes and a valid poser would be “so what?” For the common man is now so accustomed, inured perhaps, to Parliament having ceased to play a prominent role in national affairs that he could not be bothered, it matters so little to his daily life, rising prices, unemployment etc.

The reality is that Parliament has been reduced to a forum for political muck-raking, spewing of near-invective and acrimony - in short the kind of conduct that would be deemed disgraceful in any civilised circle. People seem to seek election to the House only to stall its very purpose. For the majority of the 800-odd “Honourable Members” seem to have a shared commitment to giving a new meaning to the term “un-parliamentary”. A reflection of the diminished esteem with which the “temple of democracy” is now perceived in the public eye is the considerable condemnation of the exercise to review (upwardly of course) the pay and allowance of MPs, questioning of the subsidies extended to the canteen: which, to be fair, is heavily patronised by media-persons, the secretariat staff and security personnel. None of that would find public resonance if MPs did their job - legislate, provide guidance to government, raise issues of public concern. Yes, scams that bleed the national coffers do arouse grave concerns, is further squandering of public monies the solution?

There is only limited value in tracing a blame-game to the now-legitimised disruption tactic. Let the NDA fume, it was the BJP under Sushma Swaraj’s leadership that had initiated the dirty game - which was not played even when Bofors blazed away. Contentions that the BJP/NDA had done so for genuine reasons, produced “results” in the shape of JPCs, ministers’ resignations etc are specious. As specious as the NDA’s “brazen it out” response after the role-reversal, or indeed the Congress’ inability to rise above playing copycat.

That the presiding officers have backed off from enforcing the punitive provisions in the rule-book suggests some complicity - in such shameful contrast to their hypocrisy-laced homilies elsewhere. Well, a one-week stand-off is neither unprecedented nor beyond a

patchwork remedy: yet that will not suffice to redeem the institution from the depths in which it has come to wallow. Our MPs must ask themselves if the continuing degradation of India's version of the Westminster model is a signal to obituary writers to start working on "Parliament RIP".

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 24, 2015

**Code of Conduct: No phone, bright clothes, water or sleep for bureaucrats in Assembly**

According to a recent notification, they are also expected to sit through the session without resting one leg over the other or stretching their arms on the armrest.

Written by Hiral Dave

The upcoming Monsoon session of the Gujarat Assembly will see bureaucrats following a strict code of conduct that prohibits them from wearing bright-coloured clothes, drinking water, munching food or paan masala, using cellphones and dozing off, while sitting in the House.

According to a recent notification, they are also expected to sit through the session without resting one leg over the other or stretching their arms on the armrest. Though similar in intent, the new notification is stricter than the one issued way back in 1996.

The 1996 notification had a polite tone saying, "officers are requested..." and "it is being informed to all". The one issued on March 18 this year, however, says "it has become necessary to draw attention and issue orders...", and then goes on to warn that not following the order could be taken seriously. "It is to be hereby noted that the ramifications could be serious to the officer and the department concerned," it says.

The new rules were reportedly announced after officials were seen taking the House "casually".

“During the sixth session of the 13th Assembly (Budget session in February-March), the Speaker had taken note of certain unacceptable behaviour at officers’ gallery in the House,” said a top official from the legislative and parliamentary affairs department, adding, “There were instances where officers were seen using phones. Some even were seen resting in casual positions with hands stretched and resting one leg over the other. Such kind of behaviour is against the decorum of the House.”

When contacted, Minister of State for Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Pradeepsinh Jadeja, however, said: “I am yet to go through the notification and its details.”

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

STATES,MAN, JUL 27, 2015

### **Driving the last nail into WB's coffin**

Uday Basu

Before the watershed West Bengal Assembly poll of 2011, Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee promised the electorate she would usher in a regime change to replace the corrupt and authoritarian Marxist rule with a clean government that would eradicate politicisation of the administration and the education system -hallmarks of the 34-year-long Left rule.

Now, as chief minister, Miss Banerjee readies herself for seeking popular mandate for a second term in 2016 she grudgingly admits her regime is infected with the same vices.

For if the ruling Trinamul has spawned in just four years tainted leaders occupying the party's highest echelons via the chit fund loot route, it has produced two education ministers - Bratya Basu and then Partha Chatterjee - who have merrily allowed party activists to terrorise the teaching community and run money-spinning rackets in the name of "helping" students get admission in colleges and universities.

Basu acquiesced in the violence unleashed on then Rabindra Bharati University Vice Chancellor Chinmoy Guha who tried to stop Trinamul students wing activists from fleecing candidates seeking admission. Chatterjee gives tacit approval to the same vicious circle operating through reported widespread manipulation of on-line admission to colleges.

Both the former and present education ministers have apparently with the connivance of the chief minister let student activists owing allegiance to their party vandalise schools, college and university campuses.

In the latest incidents Mr Chatterjee has been economical with the truth to explain his failure to stop a distinguished teacher of the Presidency University - Prof Sabyasachi Bhattacharya -from leaving the centre of excellence. At the same time he asked the media not to "pry into the Trinamul's internal matter" even when factional feuds in the ruling

party over the syndicate business and extortion bids violently disturbed public life in the Tiljala area of east Kolkata.

The education minister tried to fob off the media when told Prof Bhattacharya had categorically stated he had to quit Presidency University because he wasn't allowed to work as he had been promised to. He had to resign "with a heavy heart", as, he explained, the university authorities hadn't consulted him while taking academic decisions and turned down his recommendations for the university's academic benefit.

Mr Chatterjee insisted he had inquired and learnt that his pay packet was the reason for Prof Bhattacharya's decision to resign. The latter, however, stuck to his ground and humbly said if the minister so desired he could either ask any of the department officials to find out the real reason for his resignation or even call him up himself over phone.

The education minister's justification for continuation of the nefarious syndicate business and extortion rackets by Trinamul activists, as had been alleged by the Opposition and conceded by Miss Banerjee, has exposed the Trinamul leadership's double speak on the menace.

On 21 July Miss Banerjee used the party's main event of the calendar year - "Martyrs' Day" to commemorate the death of 13 Youth Congress activists in 1993 - to warn party activists involved in the syndicate business to "get out of the party if you continue to be in syndicate." ("Syndicate" is a euphemism for extortion rackets in real estate and other economic activities).

Only two days later Mr Chatterjee, who also occupies the position of party secretary general, virtually overturned his leader's position and asserted it wasn't possible to end syndicate business overnight, though the party was determined to curb it.

Straightway one is reminded of a parallel position when then CPI-M state secretary Anil Biswas used to take on party activists and local satraps minting money by forcing promoters to accept building materials from them for constructing multi-storeyed buildings and in many cases graduating into promoters themselves.

The Trinamul never missed an opportunity to cry foul against the “promoter raj” of the Marxist regime. Mr Biswas used to issue diktats from Alimuddin Street and the CPI-M periodically circulated an important document - “Party Letter” - among members warning them they wouldn’t be in the party if they continued to be in the real estate business. But these efforts had no impact for the simple reason that they were intended to be an eyewash only not to be taken seriously.

Both the Trinamul supremo and its secretary general are following in the footsteps of Anil Biswas and even outstripping him. For if Biswas tried to be politically correct by condemning those elements in the party before the media and through “Party Letters”, Miss Banerjee tells the whole world at the party’s biggest rally about her intention to act firmly against syndicate operations and then Mr Chatterjee concedes the activity can’t be ended overnight. He even glosses over a fight between two party factions at Tiljala as “an internal matter” not to be probed by “overenthusiastic media”.

Unlike the CPI-M, the Trinamul has no qualms about publicly expressing such contradictory positions on a menace that the party pledged to weed out before seeking votes from the people in 2011.

The end result is that the Mamata Banerjee-regime seems determined to drive the last nail into the coffin of a state that suffered over three decades of Marxist rule, its patronization of criminals and ill-directed land and industrial policies.

Miss Banerjee’s London trip from 26 July is yet another election gimmick since it’s anybody’s guess how foreign investors would risk pumping in their money in Bengal where even their Indian counterparts now fear to tread and some of them are winding up their business.

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## POVERTY

BUSINESS LINE, JUL 24, 2015

### **NITI Aayog panel's draft report treads cautiously on poverty**

AMITI SEN

**Sends draft to States for comments; to be finalised by Governing Council**

The NITI Aayog taskforce on eliminating poverty has decided to tread the middle path on the contentious issue of whether to have a poverty number to identify the poor or just use deprivation indicators for decision making.

In its draft discussion paper on mitigating poverty, which has been sent to the States for comments, the taskforce, under the Aayog's Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya, has placed arguments both in favour of and against the need for a poverty number.

“The Governing Council of NITI Aayog, which will vet the final draft, will take a final view on issues raised in the discussion paper,” a government official told *BusinessLine*. States are supposed to give their comments on the draft by mid-August.

The panel includes NITI Aayog member Bibek Debroy, Chief Statistician TCA Anant, economist Surjit Bhalla and secretaries from the ministries and departments of rural development, housing and urban poverty alleviation, financial services, MSME and skill development.

The discussion paper also states that in case a poverty number is required, it may not be necessarily calculated by the NITI Aayog. It could be calculated jointly by the Rural Development Ministry, which would give the number for rural poor, and the Urban Poverty Alleviation Ministry, which would give the number for urban poor, or the statistical commission.

“People have already started making calculations on rural poverty based on the recent findings of the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011, of the Rural Development Ministry. Although the survey is a sensitivity analysis based on certain deprivation indicators, a number can be calculated if you decide on the indicators to include and add them up,” the official said.

### **Urban poor**

The Urban Poverty Alleviation Ministry is carrying out a similar census, which will also throw up a number for the urban poor.

“We need to just calculate the aggregate to come out with a national poverty number,” the official said, quickly adding that a decision on the matter has not yet been taken.

Giving arguments in favour of doing away with poverty numbers, the document has said that none of the anti-poverty programmes, such as the Indira Awas Yojna and the Antodaya Scheme, are contingent on using anti-poverty numbers.

Moreover, the definition of poor might also differ between various sectors. A household that is considered poor for a housing programme may not qualify under a food programme.

However, the document adds that poverty numbers may be needed for two reasons; one, if there is some percentage of subsidy in poverty schemes borne by the Centre and two, poverty numbers may be needed for particular States.

Also when Sustainable Development Goals are in place — they may have targeted poverty reduction numbers — the country would need a baseline as a measure of its performance.

The taskforce's document has suggested to States that they use the Socio Economic and Caste Census survey, wherever suitable, for their welfare programmes.

The SECC has automatically excluded 39.39 per cent of the rural population from the list of poor based on 14 parameters, included 0.92 per cent based on five parameters and has divided the rest on the basis of seven deprivation indicators.

The Rural Development Ministry has reportedly classified 31.26 per cent of rural households as poor based on about four of the seven indicators.

The Rangarajan committee, a technical expert group set up by the UPA in 2012, had classified 30.95 per cent of rural Indians as poor in 2011-12.

The discussion paper also states that in case a poverty number is required, it may not be necessarily calculated by the Niti Aayog. It could be calculated jointly by the Rural Development Ministry and the Urban Poverty Alleviation Ministry or the statistical commission.

## PRESIDENTS

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUL 27, 2015

### **Rear View: Presidential tales**

Regrettably, neither before nor after has pre-poll canvassing been so sordid as in 1969, incidentally the Mahatma's birth centenary year.

Elections of presidents in this country have often been as controversial, dramatic and unpredictable as the general elections to Parliament and state assembly polls. This is rather odd, because for long years, the [Congress](#) party was so dominant that whoever was its presidential candidate, was bound to sail through. It was trouble within the ruling party that became the malaise. Jawaharlal Nehru won the first three general elections hands down and almost single-handedly. But despite his best efforts, he failed to get his nominees — C. Rajagopalachari, better known as Rajaji or C.R., in 1950 and S. Radhakrishnan in 1957 — elected as heads of state. Rajendra Prasad, who had presided over the Constituent Assembly, was India's president for 12 years until Radhakrishnan succeeded him in 1962.

In the 1967 general election, the first without Nehru but with his daughter Indira Gandhi as prime minister, the [Congress](#) tally in the [Lok Sabha](#) plummeted by as many as 82 seats. By the time it had reached a compromise under which Morarji Desai became deputy prime minister in Gandhi's cabinet, Radhakrishnan's tenure as president was coming to an end. Desai and some "party bosses" suggested that he should be given a second term. But the prime minister refused and asked them: "What answer would you give when people ask why Vice President Zakir Husain was bypassed?" The eminent educationist and former governor of Bihar won comfortably. But tragically, he died in May 1968, and all hell broke loose. K. Kamaraj and Desai, using their majority in the [Congress](#) Parliamentary Board, nominated N. Sanjiva Reddy as the party's presidential candidate, despite the prime minister's strong objection. She reacted like a

wounded tigress, “relieving” Desai of his finance portfolio but asking him to stay on as deputy PM without portfolio. Declaring that he had been treated as a “chaprasi (peon)”, he resigned.

Meanwhile, Vice President V.V. Giri, angry because he was bypassed, resigned and announced that he would contest the presidential election as an independent candidate. Indira Gandhi and her followers decided to vote for him, which more or less ensured his victory.

Regrettably, neither before nor after has pre-poll canvassing been so sordid as in 1969, incidentally the Mahatma’s birth centenary year.

The party, indeed, split into two. In 1971, Indira Gandhi reached her finest hour first by winning the general election with a huge majority, and then by her more spectacular victory in the war for the liberation of Bangladesh. Giri retired as president in 1974 and in the presidential elections that followed, Indira Gandhi’s handpicked loyalist, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, was elected president. It was he who signed the proclamation of Emergency, a 19-month nightmare, at the midnight hour on June 25, 1975. Soon thereafter he died — the second president to do so in harness — and because of the Emergency, no election could be held. Vice President B.D. Jatti went on performing the president’s functions and duties.

After the empress was overthrown in 1977 and the Janata Party came to power amidst great goodwill, Sanjiva Reddy went through the first post-Emergency presidential poll like a hot knife through butter. His term ended in 1982. At that time, Indira Gandhi was back in power with a two-thirds majority in Parliament and many state assemblies, thanks to the Janata’s ignominious self-destruction. To most people’s surprise, she gifted the

president's post to Giani Zail Singh, a former chief minister of Punjab and later her home minister. He was followed by R. Venkataraman, Shankar Dayal Sharma and K.R. Narayanan, all belonging to the [Congress](#). When Narayanan's term ended in 2002, the [BJP](#)-led National Democratic Alliance, headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was in power. The buzz in the capital was that P.C. Alexander, former principal secretary of Indira Gandhi during her second innings and then to her son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi, was going to be the next president. He was then governor of Maharashtra and on very good terms with the Shiv Sena and the [BJP](#), which were then ruling the state. Indeed, the NDA made no bones about sponsoring him for the presidency. For his part, Alexander took the [Congress](#)'s support for granted because of his long and close association with the Gandhi family in the past. He was shaken, however, when he went to see the [Congress](#) president, [Sonia Gandhi](#). For, she left him in no doubt that by her reckoning, he belonged to the "enemy camp".

Meanwhile, consultations between Vajpayee and [Sonia Gandhi](#), through the usual back channel, consisting of Brajesh Mishra, the prime minister's principal secretary, and K. Natwar Singh, [Sonia Gandhi](#)'s confidant, continued. Alexander was not acceptable to the [Congress](#).

The other side was opposed to a second term for Narayanan. But the prime minister showed willingness to bestow the honour to Vice President Krishan Kant. Indeed, both sides had even conveyed their congratulations to him. A clue to this development is given in former RAW chief A.S. Dulat's new book. He says that Vajpayee was then thinking of offering the vice president's job to [Kashmir](#) Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah — an idea that was dropped soon enough, which also explains why, at the last minute, the [BJP](#) withdrew its acceptance of Krishan Kant as president. The shock to him was so

massive that, in the words of one of his best friends, he died of a broken heart, rather than of a heart attack he did suffer.

That was when the word spread that the best candidate for the presidency would be pre-eminent defence scientist A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. It seems that the idea first came from Mulayam Singh Yadav, the supreme leader of the Samajwadi Party, and spread like a forest fire. And what a fine idea it was. Kalam proved to be a highly popular president. In Natwar Singh's words, "Kalam did not seek office; the office sought him." There is more to be said about the procession of presidents. But having exhausted the available space, this will have to be done some other time.

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