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TIMES OF INDIA

TELEGRAPH

TRIBUNE

CONTENTS

CIVIL SERVICE	3-11
EDUCATION	12-18
ENVIRONMENT	19-20
FEDERAL-STATE RELATIONS	21-22
FOREIGN INVESTMENT	23-24
GOVERNORS	25-29
HEALTH SERVICES	30-32
LABOUR	33-34
OLD AGE	35
OMBUDSMAN	36-37
POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT	38-39
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	40-44
PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM	45
PUBLISHING	46-48
TAXATION	49-50
TRANSPORT	51-52
URBAN DEVELOPMENT	53-55
WOMEN	56-58

CIVIL SERVICE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 23, 2014

Civil services trainees can take exam again this year

Soibam Rocky Singh

Candidates who successfully cleared the civil services exams (CSE) 2012 and have joined induction training to various civil services can now write the CSE 2014.

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has ruled that candidates who have cleared the CSE and have already joined training can now write the CSE 2014 in view of the recent relaxation in age and attempts made by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

In February this year, the central government had granted two additional attempts to all categories of candidates to write the CSE with consequential age relaxation of the maximum age to sit for the exam.

Now candidates in the age group of 21 to 32 years can take the prestigious exam conducted by the UPSC.

The tribunal's ruling came while adjudicating pleas of eight candidates who successfully cleared CSE 2012 and joined the National Academy of Direct Taxes (NADT), Nagpur for induction training as 67th batch of Indian Revenue Service (IRS).

Last July, when the applicants had joined the induction training they had no more chance or attempt available to take the CSE 2014.

The candidates, therefore, did not apply for extra ordinary leave for taking the CSE after completion of joining formalities at NADT and joined the induction training.

However, after learning of the relaxed norm made by the UPSC in February, the candidates applied for leave.

This was not permissible as per the existing policy of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) as no officer is allowed to write the CSE during induction training.

Ordinarily, officer trainees who wish to write the CSE again are sanctioned extra ordinary leave for one year after completing their joining formalities and then asked to join along with the next batch of probationers for induction training.

In the case of the eight candidates, they were asked to take the exam after concluding of their training.

Considering the 'extraordinary circumstances' the tribunal asked the government to consider "favourably and sympathetically" any application made by such candidates for extra ordinary leave if they wish to prepare for the exam.

“Denial of opportunity to the applicants to write the CSE again is unfair as it denies them opportunity of career advancement,” the tribunal remarked.

“This will, however, not preclude the respondents (government) from regulating the period of leave of the applicants to ensure minimum disruption of their training schedule,” the tribunal added.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 20, 2014

PM's no to ministers appointing ex-govt babus as PS

The Modi government on Thursday formally banned ministers from recruiting babus in their personal staff if the officer had worked with any minister in an earlier government. The directive will also apply to private persons.

“It has been decided by the competent authority that any officer/official/private person who has worked earlier in the personal staff of a minister in any capacity for any duration may not be appointed in the personal staff of ministers in the present government,” a circular issued by Mamta Kundra, joint secretary, department of personnel and training (DoPT) said.

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) is the cabinet minister in-charge of DoPT and is the competent authority. Thursday’s directive formalises the steps the government had already taken putting on hold the appointment of PS of several Union ministers.

Alok Singh, a 1995-batch IPS officer of the UP cadre was all set to become the PS of home minister Rajnath Singh, but his appointment was put on hold as he had served as PS to Salman Khursid, external affairs minister in the UPA government.

Similarly, the appointment of Vinita Shrivastava as PS of HRD Minister Smriti Irani was put on hold. Shrivastava was earlier the OSD to former steel minister Beni Prasad Verma.

The government had indicated its intension of not employing personal staff of UPA ministers in the same capacity in the present government when on June 10 it ordered shifting out of 42 officers, including those from the IAS and IPS, who served as either PS or OSD to UPA ministers.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUN 19, 2014

Government issues new guidelines to check delay in pensions

NEW DELHI: An employee can now send an undertaking directly to the bank to ensure quick disbursement of pension in his or her account, according to the new guidelines by the government.

“The government has decided that the requisite undertaking may be obtained by the head of office from the retiring employee and forwarded to the pension disbursing bank along with the Pension Payment Order (PPO),” the Ministry of Personnel said in a release issued today.

The bank shall credit the pension to the account of the pensioner as soon as this undertaking is received along with the pension documents, it said.

"This change in procedure has an added advantage that the PPO can now be handed over in person to the retiring employee along with other retirement dues. Earlier the pensioner had to approach the bank for PPO," the Ministry said.

With this change in rules and procedures, the pensioners would be saved of considerable inconvenience and delay and the pension will commence as soon as one retires, the release added.

The matter of delay in pension had come up for discussion during a workshop held here with the pension secretaries of various state governments on Thursday.

The delegates had pointed out during the course of deliberations that the release of pension after retirement gets delayed mainly due to two reasons.

Primarily, the delay in receipt of intimation by the pensioner that pension papers have reached the bank and secondly, delay on the part of pensioner in approaching the bank for submission of undertaking that he shall refund any amount paid to him to which he is not entitled.

Following which, the new guidelines were issued. There are about 50 lakh central government employees and 30 lakh pensioners.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 18, 2014

Controversial officer takes charge of home in UP
Rajesh Kumar Singh

Rattled by the deteriorating law and order situation in [Uttar Pradesh](#), the SP government on Tuesday removed principal secretary (home) Deepak Singhal within a fortnight of his appointment to the post.

But what has raised eyebrows is that the officer replacing Singhal – commissioner (social welfare) Rakesh Bahadur -- is just as controversial.

The frequent reshuffling of top home department officers and appointment of controversial ones has raised questions about the state government's commitment to improve law and order.

During the previous SP regime from 2003-07, Bahadur was chairman of the Noida Development Authority but when the BSP came to power in 2007, it suspended and charge-sheeted him.

A CBI probe was also ordered into the 'irregular' allotment of plots to 14 hotels, including 3-star, 4-star and 5-star varieties during Bahadur's tenure as chairman. Though

the BSP government cancelled the allotments, the Supreme Court upheld them with some riders.

In May 2012, the SP government reappointed Bahadur as chairman of the Noida authority. But the Allahabad high court on November 8 directed the state to remove him from the post. The court directed the state government not to appoint Bahadur in west UP at all as he might try to influence the investigation into the land scam.

Singhal got into a controversy for his phone conversation with then SP leader Amar Singh when the party was in power from 2003-07. In the conversation, the tapes of which were made public, the duo talked about sugar deals and SEZ tenders. Social activist Nutan Thakur had handed over the tapes chief minister Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 18, 2014

Govt plans to open up bureaucracy to outsider experts

Brajesh Kumar

Taking a leaf out of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's book, the [Narendra Modi](#) government is planning to open up the bureaucracy to experts in various fields. And for that, one need not be a career civil servant.

Called the lateral entry, the proposal was first mooted by Singh in June last year and a directive was sent based on the recommendations of the sixth central pay commission which advocated opening up of the bureaucracy at the joint secretary and above level to proven performers in different fields.

But the initiative failed after it met with stiff resistance from top civil servants who refused to identify the posts where experts could be appointed from outside.

On Monday, the department of personnel and training (DoPT) sent a directive to all ministries and departments inviting comments on lateral entries in the higher echelons of government.

The DoPT order read: "This department has not received any comments from ministries, it is therefore again requested to send your comments."

An official suggested that if Modi puts his weight behind the proposal, the resistance from the civil servants could crumble.

The previous government had been toying with the idea for years. But it was the recommendation of the justice BN Srikrishna-headed sixth central pay commission (CPC) set up in 2006 that the government got serious.

The pay commission had argued the move would ensure that domain expertise becomes the major criteria for selection to a post and break the nexus between seniority and selection to such posts with emphasis on performance.

ASIAN AGE, JUN 17, 2014

PMO scraps ministers' choice of secretaries

[Sanjay Basak](#) |

The Modi government has apparently decided to put on hold appointment of private secretaries to some Union ministers, including home minister Rajnath Singh. Other ministers whose moves to appoint personal secretaries of their choice have been blocked by the PMO include HRD minister Smriti Irani, law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, urban development minister M. Venkaiah Naidu, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, MoS home Kiren Rijiju and MoS external affairs V.K. Singh, who is also MoS (independent charge) for the Northeast region.

While it is not yet clear, there are indications that some private secretaries who have already been appointed could face the axe. Top government sources said there were "indications" that the PMO was not willing to clear the appointment of any secretary who had worked in the UPA regime.

The move has taken the ministers by surprise as there has not yet been any "official word" from the PMO. The personnel department of the government, which comes under the PMO, is expected to issue an official communication in this regard.

Union home minister Rajnath Singh reportedly pitched for Mr Alok Singh as his private secretary. Alok Singh, a 1995 batch IPS officer, had worked with external affairs minister Salman Khurshid in the previous UPA government. On the other hand, MoS home Kiren Rijiju had opted for Mr Abhinav Kumar, who was PS to the then MoS for external affairs, Shashi Tharoor. Mr V.K. Singh, MoS for development of the Northeast region, had decided to appoint Mr Rajesh Kumar as his private secretary. Incidentally, Mr Rajesh Kumar was PS to the then Union minister Chandresh Kumari Katoch.

While the ministers were awaiting an official communication from the PMO, it was being claimed that the decision had been taken on the basis of a May 26 circular that stated: "All the ministries and departments are, therefore, advised to ensure strict compliance of the laid-down procedures for all appointments, including Officer on Special Duty in the personal staff of the ministers."

However, this newspaper had reported on June 16 that Prime Minister Narendra Modi "seems to have cracked the whip on the caucus of the personal staff of ministers, who are drawn from government services. The PMO has enforced a 2010 circular which stated that 'those who have completed 10 years or more formally or informally with a minister cannot be taken in the minister's office again.'"

The move, however, appears to have confused the council of ministers. "If it's a policy decision not to appoint anyone who worked in the previous regime then we shall have to abide by it. But, in that case, it has to be communicated officially," a party functionary close to one of the ministers said. Another individual in the ministry also felt that an "order" should have been issued. He said the May 26 circular "did not state that any

individual who worked with the previous regime cannot be appointed". Earlier, the Prime Minister had made it clear that the kin of ministers should not be appointed in any position in any ministry.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUN 17, 2014

Maternity leave benefit for contractual government employees in Haryana

CHANDIGARH: Women [contractual employees](#) in [Haryana government](#) will also avail the benefit of six-month maternity leave like their regular counterparts.

At present, paid maternity leave of up to three month is admissible to women government employees who are engaged on contractual basis, an official statement said.

Chief Minister [Bhupinder Singh Hooda](#) had given his nod in this regard, it said.

Yesterday, the state government had decided to amend its regularisation policy to give permanent jobs to those who already have or will complete ten years of service by December 31, 2018.

[Assembly elections](#) in the state are due later this year.

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUN 17, 2014

Home Ministry asks bureaucrats to use Hindi on social networking sites

[Aman Sharma](#)

NEW DELHI: The central government wants bureaucrats to tweet in Hindi and use the language for posting their comments on social networking websites such as [Facebook](#), [Google](#) groups or blogs, a directive that is in line with the preference of Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#), who chooses to speak only in Hindi in his diplomatic meetings with foreign leaders.

ET has accessed an order issued by the home ministry on May 27 — a day after the Modi government was sworn into power — that makes use of Hindi "compulsory" for use in social media by the government and its officials.

"The home ministry has seen that officials of various government ministries, departments, corporations and government banks have official accounts on social

networking websites like Twitter, Facebook, Google, blogs, YouTube etc...but they ignore use of Hindi...and only use English while writing on them," says the order.

The ministry has specified that government officials will have to post comments in Hindi, besides posting comments in English if at all, while using their official accounts. "It is ordered that government employees and officials of all ministries, departments, corporations or banks, who have made official accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Google, YouTube or blogs should use Hindi, or both Hindi and English but give priority to Hindi."

It adds the directive must be brought to the notice of all government officials concerned and its implementation must be ensured.

Many government officials are on [Twitter](#) but most of them, including foreign ministry spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin — who tweets from foreign ministry's official handle @meaindia — do not tweet in Hindi.

Modi has been tweeting in Hindi from his personal Twitter handle but the PMO's official twitter handle is still to post a tweet in Hindi.

Environment minister Prakash Javadekar tweets in both Hindi and English while the MoS for finance Nirmala Sitharaman has been tweeting in English, Hindi and Tamil. BJP chief ministers Raman Singh, SS Chauhan and Vasundhara Raje also often tweet in Hindi.

MHA has a department of Official Languages that monitors the use of Hindi on official government correspondence and it is mandatory for the government machinery to communicate with the media in both Hindi and English.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 16, 2014

**Revenue secretary shunted out in budget run-up
Mahesh Langa**

The [Narendra](#) Modi-led government has shunted out revenue secretary Rajiv Takru, bringing in fertilizer secretary Shaktikanta Das to replace him.

The move comes even as the Union budget is being finalized and is unusual since senior finance ministry officials are not transferred during the budget-making exercise. It also

runs contrary to indications that the NDA would not opt for large-scale transfers of senior civil servants.

But there were suggestions that Takru might be an exception with a [Gujarat](#) government official saying Modi wasn't "favourably inclined towards Takru" due to his proximity to a senior Congress leader. Relations between the two had reportedly soured during Takru's stint in the Gujarat Urban Development Company and the state civil supply corporation.

Takru has been posted to head the department responsible for overseeing development in the Northeast. Calling the transfer 'routine', Takru said, "I have a sense of relief since I will be able to focus on development of the Northeast."

Takru had been appointed revenue secretary in March ahead of the parliamentary elections.

A BJP MP close to Modi said there were suspicions in the party that Takru was behind the Congress releasing a picture showing Modi with Afroz Fatta — an alleged Surat-based hawala operator — in the middle of the elections.

The Enforcement Directorate — which reports to the revenue secretary — had started a probe against Fatta for money laundering.

HINDU, JUN 16, 2014

Bureaucracy getting its act together, to do away with archaic rules

VINAY KUMAR

As the Narendra Modi government will soon complete its first month in office, the bureaucracy is adapting to a new work culture with stress on punctuality, efficiency, decision-making and meeting deadlines.

After his June 4 meeting with the Secretaries to various Ministries, the Prime Minister asked them to use technology for greater efficiency and effectiveness in administration. But what enthused senior officials more is Mr. Modi's faith in their commitment to, and competence in, building a better future for the country and his promise to stand by them.

"We now feel that the Prime Minister himself is backing us in our decisions, which we can take without any fear or favour; it's a great morale booster for senior bureaucrats who now feel more confident," said a senior government official, who requested anonymity.

With the Prime Minister asking senior bureaucrats to do away with archaic rules and procedures and evolve people-friendly administrative rules, officials are busy identifying at least a dozen rules or procedures that can either be simplified or done away with.

Reshuffle

Though not appearing to be in a hurry for a shake-up, the Modi government made its first high-level bureaucratic reshuffle by replacing Revenue Secretary Rajiv Takru with Fertilizer Secretary Shantikanta Das. Mr. Takru, who was Revenue Secretary since March, has been shifted to the Ministry of Development of the North-Eastern Region. The move came even as the Finance Ministry is busy preparing the maiden Budget of the new government.

In yet another key appointment, Rajeev Nayan Choubey, a Tamil Nadu-cadre IAS officer, has been posted as Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office. He replaces Shatrughna Singh, who has been shifted to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion in place of Anjali Prasad, who was appointed India's Ambassador to the World Trade Organisation. Former Agriculture Secretary P.K. Mishra, who had earlier served in Gujarat, has been appointed Additional Principal Secretary, a new post created in the PMO.

Office upkeep

Apart from ensuring attendance of all officials strictly by 9 a.m. every day, the senior officials are supervising the general upkeep of office premises.

As the new government's emphasis on technology is all too evident, e-files, though introduced by the United Progressive Alliance government but never implemented seriously, are being encouraged right from the level of section officers.

"There are file trackers to track a file and ensure there are no unnecessary delays. Most important is the timeline of files which has to be adhered to strictly, and while electronically clearing files and uploading scanned documents, movement can also be tracked easily," an official said.

The stress is on general improvement of the workplace to result in a better work culture and efficient services to the citizens, officials said.

Modi has stressed efficiency and effectiveness in administration

EDUCATION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 22, 2014

UGC orders 4-year undergraduate course out, DU defiant

Defying the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Delhi University (DU) Saturday refused to scrap the controversial four-year undergraduate programme, raising fears that college admissions could be staring at a nursery-like mess.

Hours after the university regulator ordered a rollback of the year-old course bitterly opposed by students and teachers, DU passed a resolution, saying it had “revised” the programme and it no longer violated the national education policy (NEP).

The standoff not only leaves 60,000 students already pursuing the course facing uncertainty but also threatens to derail arguably the most fiercely fought admission process in the country. This year, DU has received 2.75 lakh applications for 54,000 undergraduate seats.

In a stern order sent Friday night, the UGC asked DU to restore the three-year programme — prevalent prior to the introduction of the four-year course -- for admissions this session and subsequent years.

It also asked university to ensure that students already in the four-year programme were moved to the three-year system.

The regulator faulted the university for not conforming to NEP that follows 10+2+3 pattern — three years to a bachelor’s degree — other than professional courses — after passing Class 12.

After a five-hour long meeting of its academic council, the university decided to write to the UGC, saying applicants would be admitted to the three-year bachelor’s degree programme in conformation with NEP. Students who want honours degree or a B Tech would have to study for another — fourth — year, it said.

But there is nothing new in the so-called revised proposal. At present, only honours student have to spend four years to get the degree.

The four-year course allows students to exit the course in two years – for which they get a diploma. Another year, they get a degree and one more year earns them an honours degree.

The UGC issued its orders under a law that along with financial powers allows it to oversee compliance of its orders and academic interests of students, pre-empting DU argument of being an autonomous body.

The university gets most of its funds from the UGC.

The BJP in its poll manifesto for Delhi assembly elections had promised to do away with the course.

HINDU, JUN 23, 2014

For more openness in teacher education

ROHIT DHANKAR

Emphasis on education as a single and narrow discipline is inimical to the development of a coherent field of study with a well-defined domain

A furious debate rages on between educationists connected with half-a-dozen National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) committees constituted to implement the recommendations of the Justice Verma Commission (JVC) report. The JVC itself was an outcome of a legal battle over granting permission to some 291 institutions in Maharashtra to run Diploma in Education (D.Ed) courses. The report and what the NCTE is doing to implement its recommendations should be a matter of public concern as it pertains to the regulatory mechanisms governing teacher education in the country. The battle now between two sides of educationists is essentially about how closely teacher education in the country should be controlled or how best to throttle it.

The JVC was constituted by an order of the Supreme Court while the NCTE constituted several committees to work out norms for regulation, the qualification of the teacher educator and so on. One of these committees, under Prof. Poonam Batra, is to review the existing regulatory functions of the NCTE regarding grant of recognition and related functions, including the educational and professional qualifications for teacher educators for D.Ed, Bachelor of Elementary Education (B.El.Ed), Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and Master of Education (M.Ed). These norms, if accepted, will be applicable to all teacher education programmes.

Meanwhile, the NCTE has said, the enabling recommendations of the JVC are being operationalised by a committee with extremely limited grounding in education and constituted another more balanced committee under the chairmanship of Prof. N.K. Jangira to work out qualifications for the B.El.Ed and D.El.Ed programme. The raging battle, though is primarily between the protagonists of these two committees.

Qualifications and eligibility

What all this shows is that the issue of qualifications and eligibility for teacher educators and teacher education itself, needs to be reconceptualised. Many commissions and committees have flagged the two very serious problems with our teacher education — one, its isolation from university education; and two, its reliance on ritualistic practices rather than developing capabilities required for a ‘thinking practitioner.’ In spite of correctly spotting these problems, not many educators understand that these two problems are much aggravated by the NCTE itself, though they existed even prior to its creation.

Most teacher education colleges lack liberal arts and science education programmes; ghettos tightly controlled by NCTE norms. There is no research, nor interaction with the larger academic community.

A knowledge base

All our committees and commissions since the Radhakrishnan Commission on Higher Education (1948), as well as educationists have always lamented that teaching has not developed into a profession in our country, and that the development of teaching as a profession is essential to improving the quality of school education. But what does it mean for a vocation or practice to develop into a profession? Of course, there are structural and socio-political aspects of a profession; but what lies at its heart is academic and epistemic. However, in brief, a practice that (i) is based on a wide ranging knowledge base, (ii) capable of being justified and understood in theoretical framework(s), (iii) has intellectual coherence and independence and (iv) has a close interaction between development of theory and practice with substantial engagement from the practitioners themselves, can be reasonably called a profession from an academic point of view. That is, if (v) there is a substantial body of practitioners and (vi) sufficient institutional structures to support it. Teaching and teacher education meet the last two conditions in India; the problem is conditions (i) to (v), which are concerned with knowledge base, methodology and epistemology.

For such a knowledge base to develop, an academic community has to work for long and in a sustained manner. Education, by nature, is an interdisciplinary field; to bring insights from all these disciplines of knowledge to bear upon the purposes, content and processes of education, an academic community has to be rooted in educational issues and have in-depth knowledge of some or other of these disciplines. All this is impossible without freedom in curriculum, assessment and pedagogic processes, and also the freedom to learn through mistakes.

We need to realise that teaching can hardly develop into a profession without the simultaneous development of education as an intellectually coherent field of study. They are complementary. The emphasis on education as a single and narrow discipline is inimical to the development of a coherent field of study with a well-defined domain and with the capability to draw upon the depth of knowledge, especially in the disciplines mentioned earlier.

Over-regulation in the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, therefore, will retard the development of teaching as a profession as it will forbid the experimentation with varied and legitimate permutations and combinations of content from various areas of knowledge.

Separately, we need to make a distinction between the processes of (i) creation of knowledge, (ii) teaching of knowledge or constructing knowledge in the students' mind, and (iii) impact of knowledge on the behaviour of the knower or using knowledge in judgment and practice. Teacher education has to bestow a certain mastery to student-

teachers in all three processes. The creation of knowledge is a rigorous process and has to meet some epistemic criteria. The impact and importance of these criteria can be understood only through a serious study of connected frameworks in which such knowledge is formed. Meddling with these frameworks in an arbitrary manner will create confusion and will privilege testimony of the teacher or the book over the independent judgment of the learner, as the learner will have no grounding on the criteria.

Flexibility

Finally, through stringent regulations in terms of teacher educator qualifications, curriculum, attendance, etc. we are closing opportunities available to teacher education institutions. This will throttle teacher education. If we want teacher education to develop into a respectable profession, greater flexibility is needed.

Today, where a majority of teacher education institutions, be they public or private, have shown very little capability, seriousness and commitment, granting them freedom looks like a contradiction. But we have to think anew. The irresponsibility of the institutions is due to political patronage and corruption in NCTE implementation. We have a history of trying to solve socio-political problems in education through academic and pedagogical means; it does not work. We should not compromise on academic principles of flexibility and openness due to an institutional inability to create mechanisms of implementation.

(Rohit Dhankar is professor and director, academic development at Azim Premji University, Bangalore, and honorary secretary, Digantar, Jaipur.)

HINDU, JUN 23, 2014

UGC order may not be implemented immediately

VIJETHA S. N.

The UGC order directing the Delhi University to roll back the four-year undergraduate programme (FYUP) will not be effective unless another meeting of DU's Academic and Executive Council is convened so as to revert to the three-year programme.

Although, the university remained tight-lipped and refused to comment, sources close to *The Hindu* said that a hush-hush meeting had been convened late on Sunday evening. According to some officials in the university as well as those in the know Delhi University Vice-Chancellor Dinesh Singh might tender in his resignation if, despite all his efforts to save the four-year undergraduate programme, the university is forced to revert to the three-year programme. "The FYUP is after all the DU V-C's brainchild and he has fought tooth-and-nail to save it. He will resign in all probability," said the official who did not wish to be named.

The Academic Council had met on Friday and had decided to appeal to an earlier order of the UGC directing it to roll-back the course. Another meeting of the Executive Council which was set to take place on Monday has been indefinitely postponed.

The admission process which begins on Tuesday might also be postponed. Meanwhile, the teachers and students who were protesting against the course were jubilant but were taking no chances.

Teachers said that the university's excuse saying its admission procedure could be stalled was hogwash. "Admissions can be done by adhering to the 2012 guidelines in terms of seats, it can also be postponed for a number of days to reduce confusion," said Abha Dev Habib from the "Save DU campaign.

DECCAN HERALD, JUN 17, 2014

Is education necessary?

Prasenjit Chowdhury

In India's vast pool of unemployable graduates, it must count as a stuff of fantasy for someone who is not even a graduate to become the HRD minister requiring her/him to deal with the entire gamut of Indian education — its literacy rate, education both at primary and secondary level, university and technical education.

By this one single move, Modi has nailed our system of academic brahmanism. If Smriti Irani turns out to be an imaginative HRD minister, it would once again prove, which we were long suspecting, that formal education and academic degrees in India, are cosmetic appendages, just to gain entry in a select few professions, politics not being one of them.

In the academic world, however, hierarchy runs supreme. Media and corporate houses before hiring people scrutinise very carefully what public school, college or varsity has an applicant attended.

An Ivy League or Oxbridge education universally carries more weight than one acquired at home. Or even at a baser level, a degree from Jadavpur University or Jawaharlal Nehru University is seen to have greater academic recognition than one obtained through distance education mode.

To acquire an engineering degree from an IIT (the IITs have also their grades) is deemed more valuable in the job market than a degree from some nondescript private engineering college much in the same way a management degree from an IIM has got to be qualitatively different than one from an ordinary B-school.

Quality and specialisation do matter when they are perquisites for a job. Academia is one such thing. The medical or legal profession is another. But in India as elsewhere, academic qualifications and professions are often quite unrelated.

Historian Ramchandra Guha recently pointed out how Morarji Desai as prime minister showed vision taking recourse to professional expertise in roping in an economist (Manmohan Singh) as secretary in the finance ministry, a plant scientist (MS

Swaminathan) as agriculture secretary, a chemist (Lovraj Kumar) as petroleum secretary, an engineer (Manuel Menezes) as secretary of defence production as a departure from the tradition of secretary-level appointments being monopolised by IAS officers, who can theoretically be a graduate from any, often unrelated, discipline.

Though there is near general consensus that education helps in formulating better policies or nurturing richer insights, we cannot be very sure always. For all his education, Murli Manohar Joshi defended Vedic astrology as an imprimatur to save India's ancient, necessarily Hindu, culture against the 'self-hating, secularised/ westernised elite.'

Former prime minister Manmohan Singh's formidable education, an MA in Economics from Punjab University, with academic laurels from both the Cambridge and Oxford University, did not prevent him from surrendering his dignity and own mind to a lady who had been known more for her cunningness than her education.

That Singh was comprehensively electorally 'defeated' by an 'average' student from a Vadnagar school who grew later to become Narendra Modi, a graduate with an extramural degree through distance education in political science from Delhi University and later an MA in the subject from Gujarat University was another travesty of Singh's education.

Children's illiteracy

According to Unesco's 11th Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, released in January this year, 90 per cent of children from poor families remain illiterate despite completing four years of school education. Also, around 30 per cent of children remain illiterate even after attending five-six years of school.

Middle class parents complain that they are spending 50 per cent or more of their disposable income on education and extracurricular activities for children, which, according to a report by Assocham, come down to a whopping Rs 65,000 per annum on education per child at school level, and let's assume that it is the cost of an average English medium school. If the fees for IITs hiked from Rs 50,000 to Rs 90,000 per annum look modest, an MBA degree in India from a reputable college can easily cost between Rs 10-16 lakh per annum.

Our colleges and varsities routinely churn out unemployable graduates or hand out worthless diplomas without caring to develop the skills prized by employers, confirmed further by the National Skill Report 2014 prepared by the CII, PeopleStrong and Wheebox.

Pointing to our threatened public university system, President Pranab Mukherjee recently noted that out of top 200 universities in the world, not a single Indian institute finds its place, ruing that none out of over 600 universities, 30,000 degree giving colleges and 16 IITs in India is world class.

Therefore, the requirement for the Modi government should rather be to increase the core strengths of renowned institutes before it embarks on setting up more IITs and IIMs in every state.

If politics is a profession where a school dropout can rub shoulders with a PhD in cardiac anatomy from the University of Denver, what would become of the hundreds of thousands of unskilled workers, and of the vast, unemployed pool of graduates without a professional education by dint of which they can find gainful employment, supposing that not all of them are going to join politics?

Some 90 per cent of India's working population – the casual or informal workforce – many of whom are illiterate or less educated (not studied up to class VIII) remain outside the loop of India's vocational training system which, in plain terms, means that India lacks sufficient skilled workers. As per one estimate, of the 1.5 million engineering students in India, over 70 per cent are unemployed.

The growing mass of a largely undereducated and unemployable young people who aspire to a better life but clueless as how to get there accounted, to a large degree, for the overwhelming mandate for Modi. Not all of them can become ministers, or pracharaks. The real challenge for Ms Smriti Irani, therefore, would be to prize skill over grades in our education system and to put an end to all sham degrees.

ENVIRONMENT

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUN 18, 2014

The river must flow

[K C Sivaramakrishnan](#)

It was the summer of 1985, the first meeting of the Central Ganga Authority was being held. They were all there — the then prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, the Union ministers of finance, water resources, environment and science. I was there as the project's first director. We all agreed on the following. First, even in the mightiest of rivers, water has to flow. Without water, a river is a ditch beyond cleaning. Second, that watershed management was essential for maintaining the flow of the river.

Third, that the purity of the waters of the Ganga was legendary but that this was because of the countless micro-organisms in the river. Over the years, chemical fertilisers and pesticides had affected these organisms, rendering the river vulnerable. Fourth, that pollution — waste and sewage discharged into the river from the many cities along its banks — was a phenomenon of recent years, thoughtless and without restraint. And last, that industries and others extracting water from the Ganga should pay for it and not discharge their waste into the river. All this was known to and accepted by the powers that be. But we made three mistakes.

One was to regard the Ganga project as a substitute for sewage treatment. Engineering reports had conjured up a picture that sewage treatment would yield saleable products — methane and fertiliser — which could be used to pay for the project. There was also the hope that a variety of technologies for sewage treatment would be available to be applied in the project. But before long, the project was tied up in sponsoring sewage treatment plants, which should really have been the concern of the municipalities. The second mistake was to succumb to pressure from various agencies, including the courts, to make all settlements, big and small, the concern of the Ganga project. This diluted the project's priority and selectivity, reduced it to a platform for ceaseless design and tender disputes between the squabbling parastatals of public health, engineering, municipalities and others. The third was the belief that engineers could discipline the Ganga by training its course, hemming its banks, curtailing its spread and diverting its waters to provide flushing doses. The hidden agenda was to extract valuable real estate from the river. But the nagar nigams and municipalities were marginalised and had little to do with the programme. The cities and the Ganga depend on each other for their life. One without the other has no meaning.

It's good that the prime minister has turned his attention to Varanasi, one of the world's continuously inhabited settlements. The mayor of Varanasi, like his colleagues in the state, has only one blessing — a five-year tenure. He has to take charge of the city. The jal nigam, development authorities and various other bodies should be accountable to him. And the mayor should be politically accountable for this project. He may succeed or be swept away like the floating debris in the river. To the clinical and antiseptic Western mind, the dead bodies, half or partially burnt, floating in the river are cause for consternation. But the human body is biodegradable. Industrial and agricultural chemicals are not. Downstream from Varanasi, in Rampur and beyond, there used to be large groups of turtles that fed on the carcasses.

And the Gangetic ghariyal kept the turtles from proliferating. Sometime during the 1990s, the Ganga project became the sideshow for the national rivers authority. That authority went about listing ditches across the country for so-called cleaning. One such was the Coom. The government of India was generous — money was for the asking. The idea of the Ganga does not need to be sold to the people. It is part of the belief systems of most Indians. Yet the project failed to devise a programme for public education and support for the care of the Ganga. One redoubtable woman, Pупul Jayakar, made some valiant efforts through Intach.

The Planning Commission under Manmohan Singh was warm to the idea, but by the time proformas and receipt books in triplicate were designed for public contributions, it was too late. The PM has now created yet another opportunity. There is no need to travel all over. Be selective. Focus, as has rightly been done, on Varanasi. Invest the mayor with authority and let us hope that the job can be done. Has anyone seen the image of the goddess, Ganga? She rides a ghariyal. The message is simple — leave Ganga alone, she's your mother. Don't heap filth on her head, let the water flow. She will recover.

The writer was the first project director of the Central Ganga Authority and is chairman, Centre for Policy Research, Delhi express@expressindia.com

FEDERAL-STATE RELATIONS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 18, 2014

Re-crafting Centre-state ties cannot be a one-way affair

[Kanchan Gupta](#)

Those of us who came of age during the turbulent 1980s would remember the hysterical denunciation of the Union government by Opposition parties in power in the states. It would be in order to recall for others that berating the Centre, where the Congress was in power, for its 'step-motherly' treatment of states where anti-Congress parties ruled was a daily routine and featured prominently on the front pages of newspapers published from Srinagar, Kolkata, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Jyoti Basu led from the front and Kolkata became the hub of 'Opposition Conclaves'. The states' complaint was three-fold: Unfair division of taxes, leading to inadequate provision of central funds; political high-handedness of a hubris-prone Congress, resulting in [New Delhi](#) riding roughshod over state capitals; and, negation of the spirit of federalism, causing the rise of regionalism.

We have come a long way since those days of caustic attacks on an 'insensitive Centre' that dominated popular and academic discourse, best exemplified by the acid-laden essays of Marxist economist Ashok Mitra. Along with several others, he provided statistical validity and intellectual legitimacy to the Opposition chief ministers' campaign for greater resources and a bigger say in how to manage their affairs. The 'disinherited states' too have come a long way and many now boast of a robust economy. The restructuring of sharing of resources between the Centre and the states has addressed the bulk of the grievances and interventions by the Supreme Court have put an end to the abuse of power by misusing provisions of the Constitution, namely Article 356. Coalition politics between 1989 and 2014 has had its effect too, making the Union government more accommodative of regional aspirations.

Yet, Centre-state relations remain fraught, largely on account of increasing realisation among the states that the Centre's unitary approach stifles soaring aspirations and becomes a barrier to delivery of services. The one-size-fits-all, top-down model around which central policies and programmes have been crafted till now may have been politically beneficial to the party in power (though that's debatable after this summer's election) but they have not necessarily served the larger good. This has been most acutely felt during the past decade when chief ministers found themselves largely, if not entirely, excluded from the decision-making process even as a new, more demanding, India emerged with a dramatic demographic shift. The National Development Council became a relic of the past. The National Advisory Council wasn't quite a substitute.

It is against this backdrop that we need to see Prime Minister [Narendra Modi's](#) emphasis on re-crafting Centre-state relations, as enunciated by him in his reply to the debate on the President's address in Parliament. There are three salient features of what he said. First, the prime minister should not, indeed cannot, work in isolation if India has to prosper collectively as a nation. He should be the leader of 'Team India',

comprising him, his ministers and the chief ministers. This does not entail a formal arrangement but an informal yet elaborate process of consultation so that the top-down approach of the Centre in framing policies and programmes, or the central plan for that matter, is turned on its head and becomes bottom-up. Second, New Delhi must discard its one-size-fits-all model for centrally-funded programmes.

States should have the liberty to decide what is in their interest and funds should be reallocated accordingly. Third, states should be clustered according to commonality of interests and requirements — for instance, hill states, coastal states, desert states, etc — and separate policies framed for them. This would correct the discriminatory approach that is the cause of much grief.

As a framework for a new era of federalism based on cooperation and consultation instead of conflict and adversity, what Modi has proposed is unexceptionable and welcome. Having served as a chief minister for more than a decade, he understands the need to kindle and sustain the spirit of federalism, if only to avoid debilitating friction. More importantly, if the world's interest in the now forgotten 'India Story' is to be revived, it can only be done by ensuring the development, growth and prosperity of all the states. The new 'India Story' cannot but be the sum total of the stories of its 29 states. The state governments realise the potential of this approach, the opportunities it offers and the prospects it creates. An adversarial relationship with the Centre is equally, if not more, debilitating for the states. A participatory role, on the other hand, not only facilitates the meeting of local aspirations but also ensures a fair slice of the development cake.

There are, however, challenges that Modi will meet and have to overcome. These challenges will stem from three realities that cannot be wished away, no matter how noble the intention of restructuring Centre-state relations. First, state governments that are prone to fiscal indiscipline will see in the new arrangement an opportunity to squander more and deliver less while insisting on diminished accountability. Populism is still seen as a virtue, or else Chandrababu Naidu would not have waived farm loans immediately after taking charge as chief minister. In [Punjab](#), Parkash Singh Badal is regretting the introduction of property tax. Second, unless coupled with rewards for performers, a re-calibrated transfer of funds is unlikely to result in competition among states to out-perform each other. Helping laggard states to get going is one thing, pandering to the demand for 'special status' is quite another. Third, the spirit of federalism that Modi so eloquently talks about cannot be a one-way affair, the states must reciprocate in equal measure. Inter-state conflicts and disputes take a toll not only on their economies but on the national economy too. Will states be able to rise above narrow regional, at times even parochial, interests to help shift the paradigm of how India is governed?

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

PIONEER, JUN 20, 2014

GOVT BANS DIRECT FOREIGN FUNDING OF NGOS

Voluntary organisations will now have to fulfil stringent regulatory norms and show compliance reports

The Centre has banned direct foreign funding to NGOs operating in India unless they fulfil stringent regulatory norms and show compliance reports. This is seen as the beginning of a process to block flow of foreign aid to NGOs, which, it perceives, are engaged in stalling developmental activities in the country. As per this exercise, the Centre has cracked down on NGO Greenpeace and placed on its radars thousands of other voluntary organisations receiving foreign aid.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has directed the Reserve Bank of India to take prior permission of the Home Ministry's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Department before clearing any foreign aid to Greenpeace from Greenpeace International and Climate Works. This directive issued on June 13, will put on hold direct funding of this controversial NGO from abroad since each transaction has to be cleared on a case-to-case basis by the RBI.

Greenpeace International and Climate Works Foundation are the two principal international contributors to Greenpeace India Society. The RBI has been asked to direct all banks on this order. Foreign donations to the Greenpeace have been put on "prior category" list so that permission is taken before any money flows in for funding its activities.

In an attempt to tighten the noose around other similar NGOs, the MHA has directed that in addition to FCRA clearance, they will also have to inform the RBI in detail about the nature of foreign funds and its usage. "This has been done to streamline the foreign funding process of NGOs after some deficiencies were discovered during course of scrutiny," said an MHA official.

This instruction has come after the Intelligence Bureau filed a report to the Government putting a question mark on the role of certain NGOs, especially Greenpeace International. Though there are over two lakh NGOs working in India, this directive will affect roughly 40,000 groups.

This is not the first time a Government is making an attempt to choke foreign funding of NGOs. The UPA Government repealed the old Foreign Contribution Regulation Act in 2010 with more stringent provisions. In fact former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during his tenure in 2012 too had blamed US-backed NGOs for blocking development work in India.

"There are NGOs, often funded from the United States and the Scandinavian countries, which are not fully appreciative of the development challenges that our country faces," Singh had said when he faced stiff opposition by NGOs for genetically modified crops in India and civil Nuclear plant at Koodankulam.

The IB report had also recommended cancellation of permission given to Greenpeace for collecting funds abroad besides reassessment of its tax compliance.

The report has also listed another 12 foreign nationals who have been associated with some NGOs in their campaign against coal mines, power projects and Nuclear power plants.

The Greenpeace has rubbished the IB report and claimed that the organisation has committed no irregularities. The IB report has prompted anti-Nuclear activist SP Udayakumar to send a legal notice to the Union Home Ministry seeking action against a Joint Director of IB for allegedly defaming him by leaking the secret IB report.

Till May 2013, Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) - which works in close coordination with rural NGOs - had blacklisted 886 such entities on various counts including submission of forged documents, misappropriation of funds and improper execution of work orders.

GOVERNORS

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUN 19, 2014

Why the post of governors should be abolished

By [Rajesh Ramachandran](#)

Despite SC order restraining former UPA govt from removing governors without reason, Modi govt is said to have asked governors to move out of Raj Bhawans.

Every nation spends a lot on pomp and show, to celebrate itself. So, the tanks and the tableaux rolling down [Rajpath](#) on January 26 is a hair-raising experience for many. But should the tax-payer subsidise geriatric fantasies of manipulative have-beens parked at [Raj Bhawans](#) in state capitals, merely to let them hoist the national flag on January 26? The office of the governor should have been abolished five years ago when a governor was caught on camera with three women all over him satiating the 83-yearold sex addict's sick mind. That was the right moment to strike at the roots of the gubernatorial humbug. Then, the [UPA government](#) itself was struck by a strange kind of paralysis, stopping it from governing, let alone doing a radical overhaul.

[Narendra Modi](#) sought and got a mandate to cut the rotten flab and the make the State young, energetic and functional. Instead, the [NDA](#) government is going down the same slimy path of political shenanigans.

Despite a Supreme Court order restraining the former Congress-led government from removing governors without reason, the Modi government is said to have asked the governors to move out of their plush old age homes. But, for what? Of course, to accommodate NDA's unemployable leaders well past their sell-by-date.

Politics, like every other enterprise, accumulates a lot of people not really needed to run it. However much the power-hungry politicians disagree, ageing and death are the only two certainties in life even for politicians. The post of governors in state capitals is, thus, a convenient retirement sinecure for unemployable (and often cantankerous) politicians, who need to feel important.

Our contemporary history is full of instances of high-handed governors, appointed by a strong Union government, turning against popular leaders in the state. Congressman Ram Lal has managed to remain a footnote of history by dismissing the [NT Rama](#)

[Raogovernment](#) and installing Nadendla Bhaskar Rao as chief minister of Andhra Pradesh for 31 days in August-September 1984.

That was the beginning of the end of governors meddling with elected governments of the Opposition. Sure, in 1997, Romesh Bhandari too tried to ease Kalyan Singh out of the government and install [Jagdambika Pal](#) as CM. But the court's intervention, intense media scrutiny and the political legitimacy of the Opposition gradually clipped the wings of political vultures in Raj Bhawans.

Till 1967, when most of the country was ruled by [Congress](#), the governor, usually an import from Delhi, acted as a parallel power centre and was used by the 'high command' to rein in the more popular local leader. Now, with the rise in regional forces, no governor can afford to disturb the federal structure or the independence of state governments.

Now, the colonial-era Raj Bhawans have only ceremonial functions like receiving the letter of the winner staking claim to form the government or swearing her in as CM. In times of political crisis, the Raj Bhawan becomes a venue to parade political horses, recently bought or sold. But in such crises too the governor's role is limited to ordering a floor test of the relative strength of the parties in the assembly, which is actually done by the Speaker.

Most of these functions can be done by the Chief Justices of the High Courts, who in any case swear in governors. The Speakers can read out the "governors' address to the assembly", which is the government's declaration of intent and has nothing to do with the governor.

So, the best course of action for the Modi government is to dump governors, declare those beautiful old Raj Bhawans as heritage museums or resorts and save a lot of money by way of salaries, perks and "entertainment" expenses of doddering oldies who can do nothing in office.

And let a really worthy, venerated, senior citizen, a teacher, a technocrat, a poet, a philosopher hoist the national flag in state capitals on January 26

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 19, 2014

Maharashtra, Bengal governors prepare for fight

Amid reports that some UPA-appointed governors are holding out against attempts to ease them out of office, [Maharashtra's](#) K Sankaranarayanan and [West Bengal's](#) MK Narayanan have taken a firm stand against giving up their posts.

While the Maharashtra governor has said he will quit only if asked by an “appropriate decision-making authority” to do so, the West Bengal governor has said he would convey his decision once things are clear.

“Union home secretary Anil Goswami called me twice during last week (asking to demit office). I didn't reply to him...the governor's post is a constitutional one. He is a representative of the President. No responsible person has asked me anything in writing to (be) relieved of the post.

“If an appropriate decision-making authority asks me (to quit), I will definitely think over it,” he told a Malayalam TV channel.

The West Bengal governor also was quite terse in responding to questions about his resignation. “I have not resigned yet. I am not obliged to tell you what I will do. Once I take a decision I will let you know,” Narayanan said while talking to the media on his way to attend a programme at GD Birla Sabhaghar in Kolkata.

Both the Octogenarian leaders took over the governors of the respective states in 2010.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress targeted BJP over the issue with Mamata Banerjee siding with the governor. “The governor is not a political person. It will be sad if he is removed on political grounds,” remarked Subrata Mukherjee, senior TMC leader and state panchayat minister.

According to sources, the West Bengal CM already had a discussion with Narayanan on the question when she visited him on Tuesday.

Three governors B L Joshi ([Uttar Pradesh](#)), HR Bhardwaj ([Karnataka](#)) and J B Patnaik (Assam) – have already submitted their resignations. Some others, including Sankaranarayanan, have apparently decided to resist the move.

TIMES OF INDIA, JUN 17, 2014

Uttar Pradesh governor BL Joshi resigns

NEW DELHI: Uttar Pradesh governor BL Joshi resigned from his post on Tuesday.

BL Joshi sent his resignation papers to Union home ministry, according to reports.

BL Joshi's resignation comes amid reports that Modi government has asked 7 UPA-appointed governors to step down.

Sources in the government said Union home secretary Anil Goswami had called up seven governors and suggested that they put in their papers.

The seven governors who were told to step down are M K Narayanan in West Bengal, Sheila Dikshit in Kerala, Margaret Alva in Rajasthan, Kamla Beniwal in Gujarat, BL Joshi in UP, K Sankaranarayanan in Maharashtra and Devendra Konwar in Tripura.

There are reports that three UPA-appointed governors are likely to meet President Pranab Mukherjee later in the day.

Kerala governor Sheila Dikshit has refused to react on the issue and said she can't react to rumours, the news channel reported.

Rajasthan governor Margaret Alva called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday.

"It was a courtesy call," a PMO statement said without giving any further details on the meeting Alva had with Modi at his residence.

The BJP, meanwhile, has called UP governor's resignation a natural course of action.

"Resignation is a natural course of action after change in government," UP BJP chief told Times Now.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 19, 2014

Modi govt might regret removing governors of state

After nearly a month of several impressive initiatives, the NDA government's attempt to remove governors in some states is a move it might end up regretting. The issue is already developing into a major controversy. [Uttar Pradesh](#) Governor BL Joshi resigned immediately after discerning Delhi's intent but Sheila Dikshit in Kerala and others are not inclined to oblige. The ruling BJP is of the view that it can place nominees in Raj Bhavans and it cites several instances where the Congress shunted governors upon assuming power. That is true; the Congress did replace several governors over the years but a Supreme Court ruling in 2010 makes removal now a lot more complicated. A five-judge Constitution bench ruled then that a change in government "is not a ground for removal of governors holding office to make way for others favoured by the new government." Governors cannot also be removed on grounds of policy differences with the Union government. The court agreed that governors ruled "during the pleasure of the President"; they could be dismissed under Article 156 (1) without being given reasons or notice, but their removal could not be done in a manner that is "arbitrary, capricious or unreasonable". Sacked governors can approach the court and if a prima facie case of arbitrariness is established the Union government can be asked to furnish evidence that the governor was removed for "good and compelling reasons".

It is not clear if any governor will challenge the Centre in court but it could be embarrassing for the government if someone mustered the nerve to. There are legitimate arguments about propriety to consider. Few doubt that the governors in question are Congress loyalists, but the Centre has not yet made a compelling case for their dismissal. BJP leaders have argued that it is the established 'tradition' for governors to go once a new government is in place. There are, however, sometimes good reasons to dispense with tradition, particularly when it comes to restoring the integrity of a constitutional office.

The [Narendra Modi](#) government has impressed many with its energy, decisiveness and intent to break with the past. It must strive not to repeat the mistakes of the Congress in this regard and dispel the impression that it is just looking for opportunities to placate figures it could not accommodate in government. The government must privilege persons of eminence when it does get to make new appointments. The post of governor must be taken off the roster of spoils that party political figures get to eye with glee. There is constitutional office, propriety, legal compliance and goodwill for the government at stake here.

HEALTH SERVICES

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 20, 2014

Health ministry plans to give 50 basic essential medicines free
Sanchita Sharma

After recently prescribing the need for 'bitter medicine' to resuscitate the ailing economy, the [Narendra Modi](#) government is, seemingly, working on contours of a social welfare healthcare project to sweeten the deal for the citizenry. For starters, the health ministry's vision is to provide 50 essential generic medicines, free of cost, from "birth to death" to all Indians across the nation.

"Fifty basic essential drugs address 75% of the healthcare needs of the majority, and we plan to make these available free to everyone, from birth to death," Union health minister Harsh Vardhan told HT.

The programme will be rolled out in phases, beginning with select hospitals across India, with the objective of reaching every citizen.

Once the rollout is complete, everyone will get these 50 medicines – that include traditional treatments for pain, infection, hypertension, diabetes, among others – complimentary on prescription at public hospitals and dispensaries.

"A standard list of medicines will ensure that for the same amount of money, 35% more medicines of superior quality can be procured to meet the healthcare needs of the majority," said Dr Vardhan.

"The programme will focus on efficient procurement, quality control and rational use – 50% medicines are wasted or overused, leading to complications and drug- resistance," the minister added.

Notably, as the Capital's health minister between 1993 and 98, Dr Vardhan implemented the 'Delhi model' of World Health Organization's "Essential Drug Programme" that drew up an essential drugs list with relevance to India's healthcare needs.

"Today, the out-of-pocket expenditure on health is 60% mainly because of two factors, medicines and diagnostics. Providing free medicines coupled with their rational prescription and use will lower cost to patients tremendously," said Ranjit Roy Chaudhury, national professor of pharmacology and chair of the committee for preparing the city's essential medicines list.

The Delhi model has been duplicated in 12 states in India and is promoted as a case study for developing nations by WHO.

TELEGRAPH, JUN 17, 2014

MD mandatory for specialist doc posts

Government decides to defy MCI norm of recognising PG diploma holders

NISHANT SINHA

The government has refused to recognise the postgraduate diploma holders for the job of specialist doctors in the state, charting a collision course with the Medical Council of India (MCI).

This is in contrast to the MCI's stand, which recognises PG diploma holders and their appointment as specialists in different disciplines.

All states except Bihar and even central health services and the railways recruit diploma holders as specialists.

“The government's decision has compounded the problem of shortage of specialists in the state, which has only 1,800 specialists against a requirement of 5,000,” said state Indian Medical Association (IMA) president Dr Rajiv Ranjan Prasad.

A two-year course after the five-year MBBS fetches one a PG diploma, while an MD degree can be obtained in three years.

The defiance against the MCI came into perspective from the additional health secretary-cum-spokesperson R.P. Ojha's take on the issue. Ojha told **The Telegraph**: “It is not necessary to abide by every guideline issued by the MCI. We have advertised these vacancies as per our requirements. So it's not necessary to go by the MCI rules every time.”

Till 2008, the state government used to accept the PG diploma for a specialist's post. But this year, the government published two advertisements — first for the recruitment of 1,800 specialists and then for 700 specialists within a month-and-a-half span.

Diploma holders were not eligible to apply, as their qualification was not deemed fit for recruitment to the post of specialists.

This was in contrast to the prevailing rules as diploma-holders were being appointed specialists in nearly all the clinical branches such as paediatrics, pathology, gynaecology, anaesthesia, orthopaedics, ENT, radiology and radiotherapy except surgery.

PG diploma holders cannot be appointed medical teachers, which is reserved for those with MD degree in any discipline.

As a result, the state received only around 1,000 applications against a vacancy of 1,800 specialists. Nearly half the candidates could not apply owing to no relaxation in age.

Speaking on this, Bihar Health Services Association (BHSA) president Ajay Kumar said: “Delayed recruitment and inappropriate personnel policy has seriously jeopardised the input of specialist doctors in the Bihar health services. The government should act fast and decisively to remove this anomaly.”

The BHSA president added that it was surprising as to why the government has not accepted diploma qualification to be the criterion for the appointment of specialists as all other states do.

Ajay Kumar said: “The only difference between the diploma and the degree courses is that the former is of two years’ duration, while the (MD) degree course is of three years. One has to write a thesis for the degree course, while the diploma course has no such provision.”

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LABOUR

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 16, 2014

West Bengal jute mill workers kill CEO over shift timings

Agitating workers of a jute mill in Hooghly district killed the chief executive officer (CEO) on Sunday morning. The incident took place hours before the workers and management officials were scheduled to sit for a meeting to discuss reduction of working hours. HK Maheshwari, the 68-year-old CEO of North Brook Jute Mill, died on his way to Uttarpara State General Hospital.

Two other officers, general manager (Works) KM Jha and security in-charge Jadu Gopal Debnath, too, suffered injuries on their heads. They were taken to a local hospital and released after treatment. Four people have been arrested.

A furious chief minister Mamata Banerjee responded promptly and asked the administration to take strong action. "I'm deeply saddened by the incident. There was a meeting today. I've inquired that BMS and CITU men were at the workers' gathering. Maheshwari went to speak to them when he was brutally thrashed. He died from his injuries on the way to hospital," Mamata said.

The police said Maheshwari and other officers were scheduled to meet the representatives of nine trade unions active at the jute mill, at Champdani, in Hooghly district, at 4pm on Sunday.

The management, citing a lack of orders as reason, wanted to reduce working hours. Over the past few months, the mill has been operational for only one shift, which means eight hours a day. On Sunday, the management was to propose either to run the plant three days a week or five hours a day. The workers, however, wanted the mill to function for at least five days a week.

"Maheshwari had an informal discussion with the union leaders early in the morning. Then he went to speak to the workers who had gathered in large numbers outside the mill. During the conversation, a section of the workers attacked Maheshwari, Jha and Debnath with iron rods and bricks," Tapan Dasgupta, a ruling party MLA and parliamentary secretary of the labour department of the state government, told HT. The attack took place at about 11am and Maheshwari, who was being rushed to hospital, died on the way at 12.30pm. His wife, Sunita Maheshwari, soon reached the hospital. The body will be handed over to his family on Monday, when Maheshwari's son reaches Kolkata from Chicago. "Workers belonging to the CITU and BMS unions were behind this attack. We're on the lookout for the culprits," district superintendent of police Sunil Chowdhury said.

This incident is reminiscent of the incident at Baranagar Jute Mill in the North 24-Parganas, in which two officials were thrashed and burned alive in January 2001.

On that occasion, the workers of Baranagar Jute Mill had been protesting against the suspension of two workers in front of the office of the CEO, Jagadamba Tiwary, and, in the process, started vandalizing Tiwari's office. Tiwari opened fire from his revolver and killed a worker, Bholu Das. Following this, the workers dragged Tiwari and the general manager (Personal), Goutam Ghosh, out of the office, thrashed them and burned them alive. "Our government won't allow such anarchy," Mamata Banerjee said on Sunday, promising strong action.

Trinamool leaders alleged that this attack thwarted the possibility of resolving the problem through talks. "This mill had closed down last April and reopened in May following successful talks. This time, too, the problem could have been solved through talks," Dasgupta said.

Condemning the act, Sanjay Kajaria, former chairman of the Indian Jute Mills' Association, said, "The IJMA denounces and condemns such a heinous act. Jute needs a political solution. Both the [West Bengal](#) government and the Centre need to set their differences aside and sit for discussions to find a solution to prevent such incidents. There should be an end to the tension between the workers and management of all jute mills."

OLD AGE

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 16, 2014

Abuse of elderly on the rise: report

There is increase in the abuse of elderly at the hands of sons, daughter-in-laws and daughters in the country as per a report of HelpAge India on Elder Abuse in India (2014). The report states that 50% of elders surveyed were abused during this year, compared to last year's 23%.

Chairman human rights commission Haryana and Uttarakhand justice Vijender Jain released the report at seminar held to mark the Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2014 at the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Sector-10, Chandigarh, on Saturday.

The report findings indicate that women seemed to be more vulnerable with 52% reported to be facing abuse against 48% men. The HelpAge research report was conducted in 12 cities across 8 states, with a sample size of 1,200 elders covering both Metro (Tier I) and Non-Metro (Tier II) cities. It aims to find out the existence of Elder Abuse, the reasons for its occurrence, its extent and what, as per the victims, were the most effective measures to deal with the problem.

Bhavneswar Sharma, statehead , Help Age India, Chandigarh, shed light on the report.

WORST AND BEST CITIES

Delhi, ranked the lowest in Elder Abuse with 22% amongst Tier-I cities, it also indicated a marginal increase of the same from 20% last year, showing a slow but disturbing growth. Bengaluru ranked the highest at 75% within the Tier I cities surveyed, while in the Tier II cities Kanpur was the lowest (13%) and Nagpur highest at 85%.

IN 2012, 79% CASES IN CITY WENT UNREPORTED

Though the survey released on Saturday did not cover Chandigarh, as it was surveyed in 2012. Sons and daughters-in-law are the primary abusers of their elders. The survey stated that 73% of elders are abused by their sons, followed by daughters-in-law that account for 15% of the total abusers. Over 79% of cases went unreported. The sample size in Chandigarh was 280, all above the age of 60.

OMBUDSMAN

HINDU, JUN 16, 2014

Lokpal: Modi government to rectify selection process

B. MURALIDHAR REDDY

The Narendra Modi government, which charged the erstwhile UPA government with framing rules for the Select Committee to choose the Lokpal against the letter and spirit of the law, has set in motion the process to `rectify' the situation.

The Finance Minister and the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha Arun Jaitley informed the House last week that the rules framed by the Manmohan Singh government for the Selection Committee were contrary to the Act with the ulterior motive of controlling the Lokpal.

“All these things, which had been done, are now to be undone and the spirit of that law, which this Parliament has enacted, has to be given full effect to, and I do not have any doubt that it will be given full effect to very soon,” he said.

According to officials in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) work has begun to effect changes in the rules on the mandate of the search committee which will be notified soon.

As per existing rules, an eight-member search committee is tasked with drawing up a panel of persons for consideration by the selection committee led by Prime Minister. These persons have to be chosen from among the panel provided by the DoPT, the rules say.

However, the government will now empower the search committee to include people from outside the list provided by DoPT for consideration by the committee, the sources said.

Besides, the DoPT has written to the Law Ministry to vet rules formed on filing of property returns by government employees under the Lokpal regime.

As per the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, every public servant shall make a declaration of his or her assets and liabilities.

The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act provides for the establishment of a Lokpal for the Union and Lokayuktas for the States to enquire into corruption charges against public functionaries.

Outlining Narendra Modi government's road map, President Pranab Mukherjee last week in his address to the Joint Session of Parliament said that the government “is committed to providing a clean and efficient administration focused on delivery. ”

Mr. Jaitley, when he was the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha raised strong objections to the “highly improper” procedure adopted by the UPA government in making key appointments to Lokpal.

He charged that the UPA government had in February this year hurriedly formed an eight-member search committee comprising Justice (retd) K.T. Thomas (as chairperson) and seven other members.

But Justice Thomas and jurist Fali Nariman had refused to be part of the search panel. His case was that the Department of Personnel has no role in framing the rules for the Selection Committee and that role belongs to the Selection Committee and Screening Committee.

“In the present case, neither of the two has any role in issuing the advertisement or inviting applications or short listing the applicants. This entire functioning has been usurped by the DoPT.”

Mr. Jaitley said he had written to the Prime Minister that the very idea of retiring or sitting judges of the highest court having to move applications for a post-retirement assignment is repugnant to the dignity of the office that they had held.

- Work begun to effect changes in the rules on mandate of search panel
- Jaitley objected to “highly improper” procedure by UPA govt. in key appointments to Lokpal

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

HINDU, JUN 17, 2014

A prime ministerial form of government

K. SUBRAMANIAN

The various measures initiated by Narendra Modi indicate that he is trying to establish an effective federalism in which national unity is strengthened

During the first joint sitting of Parliament on June 9, President Pranab Mukherjee congratulated the people of India for a decisive mandate. In the last 30 years, because of fractured verdicts leading to the formation of coalition governments, plural power centres emerged that impacted the role of the Prime Minister. This also led to the erosion of the pre-eminent position of the Prime Minister.

However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has earned legitimacy from the people, independent of his constitutional and institutional power structure, and has built a direct rapport with them. Past experience shows that in our federal set-up, a Prime Minister with a national image can be more powerful than an individual who is identified with a region of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi emerged as strong Prime Ministers. In this context it appears that with the victory of Mr. Modi, India has reached the stage of a prime ministerial government.

In Germany, the powerful position of the Chancellor diminishes the role of the cabinet. The prime ministerial government in Germany is called the “Chancellor Democracy.” The Chancellor answers to Parliament and the ministers answer to him/her. But the Indian Prime Minister is accountable to Parliament, to the people, and to his/her own party. The American president acts with the help of advisors, who sometimes overshadow the authority of the ministers.

At the heart of the Cabinet

Article 74(1) of our Constitution expressly states that the Prime Minister shall be “at the head” of the Council of Ministers and should aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions.

The Prime Minister is at the heart of the Cabinet. Under the Westminster model of government, policy formulation and decisions on important matters are the responsibilities of the ministers. Despite the constitutional provisions of the Westminster model of cabinet government in India, the Prime Minister is the undisputed chief of the executive.

The office of the Prime Minister first originated in England. William Harcourt calls him “luna inter stellas minores” or “A moon among lesser stars.” Dr. Ambedkar had once said that if any functionary under the Indian Constitution was to be compared with the U.S. President, he is the Prime Minister and not the President.

The twin objectives of the Prime Minister appears to be to grant greater autonomy to the States and have a centralised structure for governing the Union.

Prime Minister Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat for a period of nearly 13 years. However, in the case of the other five former Prime Ministers who had functioned as Chief Ministers, i.e., Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, V.P. Singh, P.V. Narasimha Rao and H.D. Deve Gowda, their tenures as Chief Minister were less than five years. Mr. Modi, because of his long tenure as Chief Minister, is of the view that it is only the progress of States that will strengthen the federal structure of the Constitution.

While addressing the BJP's National Council meeting on January 26, Mr. Modi spoke at great length on the issue of Centre-State relations and stressed the need to give greater autonomy to the States.

Within 15 days of assuming office as Prime Minister, Mr. Modi has met a number of Chief Ministers and discussed the problems related to their State governments. He also made it clear that he will work to strengthen the federal structure of the country and has further instructed his office to prioritise issues raised by the States and with sensitivity.

The various measures initiated by Mr. Modi so far indicate that he is trying to establish an effective federalism in which national unity is strengthened, and democracy and people's participation become more real. In *S.R. Bommai vs Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court ruled that the States have an independent constitutional existence and have as important a role to play in the political, social, educational and cultural life of the people as the Union does. A centralised structure of governance in which the leader has a strong control over decision-making would work best for India. A government headed by a dynamic, efficient and strong Prime Minister who can wield enormous powers by virtue of his personality, is described as a prime ministerial form of government.

Instructions to ministers

Mr. Modi has set a deadline of 100 days for all his ministers to chart out a course of action, and has also circulated a list of "do's and don'ts" among them. It is also reported that he would meet all the ministers and department secretaries individually for ideas and feedback. He has asked ministers to communicate with the public extensively and carefully, and use social media effectively. He has asked all the ministers in his cabinet to submit to him the details of their assets, liabilities and business interests within two months.

He has also directed the ministers to sever all connections with businesses in which they had interests before being appointed ministers. These directives have been incorporated in the code of conduct for ministers issued by the Home Ministry after the government took charge.

All this shows that India is heading towards a prime ministerial form of government.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

TRIBUNE, JUN 19, 2014

Cabinet approves scrapping of 80 GoMs, EGoMs

Girja Shankar Kaura

Moving on to remove the remnants of the UPA regime, the Narendra Modi-led NDA government today approved the scrapping of 80 GoMs and EGoMs set up by the last government under former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

The approval came at the meeting of the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Cabinet also decided to bring an amendment in the TRAI Act to allow its chairman to be re-appointed on a government post.

The move comes in the wake of the appointment of former TRAI chairman Nripendra Misra as Principal Secretary to Prime Minister last month, which was in violation of the TRAI Act, a department he headed from 2006 to 2009.

Misra, a 1967 batch IAS officer, served in various ministries, including telecom, commerce and fertilizers, before retiring as TRAI chairman in 2009. He also served at the International Monetary Fund and was appointed Prime Minister's Principal Secretary through an ordinance.

Now the government would bring about an amendment in the TRAI Act to give sanctity to Mishra's appointment.

While the decision to scrap the GoMs and the EGoMs was announced earlier, today's Cabinet approval is the extension of Prime Minister Modi's "mantra of minimum government, maximum governance".

Dismantling the legacy of the UPA regime, Modi had on May 31 abolished 30 Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoMs) and Group of Ministers (GoMs) and told ministries and departments concerned to take decisions on pending matters.

The PMO had said this would expedite the process of decision making and "usher in greater accountability in the system."

The ministries and departments will now process the issues pending before the EGoMs and GoMs and take appropriate decisions.

Wherever the ministries face difficulties, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office will facilitate the decision-making process. The UPA government had formed

GoMs and EGoMs to take decisions on issues like corruption, inter-state water disputes, administrative reforms and gas and telecom pricing.

The EGoMs had the power to take decisions on the line of the Union Cabinet. The recommendations of the GoMs were to be placed before the Cabinet for a final call.

Facilitating decision-making

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* The government on Wednesday approved the scrapping of 80 GoMs and EGoMs set up by the last government

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 18, 2014

PM Narendra Modi wants results, not plans
Chetan Chauhan

Link government spending to the pay-off: that's the message from Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) for department secretaries.

Disappointed with routine presentations, the Prime Minister's Office has asked department secretaries to specify how they would link each paisa the government invested to the outcome for benefit of the people.

Modi, apparently, was not very impressed with initial demonstrations made before him by secretaries, as they only indicated their ministries' mandate and vision. Most of the presentations talked about the departments' plans and proposals for the next 100 days, but not the impact. The PM was more interested in learning the outcome of the proposals and how the ministries intend to measure this. "He wants results of every paisa the government spends and the statistical measurement," a secretary-level official in the government said.

The administration has been grappling with a system to measure upshot of public outlay. The UPA government, under finance minister P Chidambaram, had come out with an outcome budget for two years, but discontinued the practice after facing criticism that the reports didn't indicate how the expenditure had changed lives of people.

Modi, however, is keen that ministries measure outcome with May 2014 as the base as promised by him in BJP Parliamentary Party meeting.

The official added that all the secretaries have been asked to tweak their presentations to include a specific component on measurable outcome. “If a new scheme is being proposed, the secretaries have to state how many people it would benefit,” he said. The secretaries have also been told to give a timeline.

This has caught some functionaries off-guard, as none of the ministries have a system to measure the change government expenditure brings to lives of beneficiaries.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 20, 2014

Govt goes after UPA's appointees in key panels

The Centre, continuing with its move to clear Raj Bhawans of UPA appointees, on Thursday asked all members of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and National Council of Women (NCW) to resign. The move came on a day President Pranab Mukherjee accepted the resignation of Chhattisgarh Governor Shekhar Dutt, the second governor to have quit this week following a nudge. Many other governors have dug in their heels. Vice chairman of NDMA M Shashidhar Reddy told HT that he had sent across his resignation to the PM the day the results were declared. But NDMA members – retired police officers and bureaucrats – had stayed put.

The NDMA is headed by the PM and the vice chairman enjoys the rank of a cabinet minister while other members enjoy the rank of a Union minister of state. K Salim Ali, a 1978-batch IPS officer who as CBI special director investigated the Ishrat Jahan fake encounter case of [Gujarat](#), is among the five NDMA members to have quit. The members resigned on Thursday, a day after home secretary Anil Goswami called them up and advised them to submit their resignations.

“This is a body headed by the PM and he should be given the freedom to select his new team,” he said, insisting that there was “no controversy” on the resignations. Reddy said he was still holding charge as such an important body should not be headless and waiting for his replacement to be named. “There can’t be a vacuum in such an important body”. For now, the NCW chairperson Mamata Sharma and National Commission for Scheduled Caste head PL Punia aren’t going to make it as easy for the government. Both have made it clear that they weren’t going to play ball and quit. Instead, the NCW chairperson has taken up the rape charge against union minister from [Rajasthan](#) Nihalchand and declared that she would write to the PM seeking his dismissal after his name cropped up in a rape case. Nihalchand hails from Rajasthan, which is also Sharma’s home state.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 20, 2014

What's the good word: bureaucrats scramble for Hindi dictionaries

Nirmala George

For the past two weeks, the top civil servants in Delhi's labyrinthine bureaucracy have been sent back to school.

Graduate degrees are commonplace in this crowd. Plenty have diplomas from Oxford, Cambridge or Harvard, and most were raised speaking English--the language used in most official documents and correspondence.

But these days, they are spending their evenings frantically looking up words after new Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) declared that all official documents must be written in Hindi. While many bureaucrats speak the language, few know the formal phrases needed for official communication.

"It's unbelievable how much time I spend rifling through the Hindi dictionary," said a senior official, who asked not to be named for fear being seen as criticizing the new government. "A simple letter now takes me ages."

Modi's campaign promises included a vow to crack the whip on Delhi's gargantuan and slow-moving bureaucracy, but the language shift is also clearly part of an outsider's attempt to etch his own imprint on the political culture of the national capital.

Many of Modi's early decisions have sent ripples of unease through the ranks of powerful civil servants, threatening to upend Delhi's long-established pecking order.

Another early signal came within days of Modi's inauguration, when news outlets reported that the government had asked for a list of bureaucrats who belonged to [New Delhi's](#) golf clubs.

"The report that such a list was being drawn up gave many of us the jitters," said another official, an avid golfer, who also requested anonymity. "The implication was that if you are a regular on the golf course, then work may not be your first priority."

The recent election brought seismic political changes to Delhi, with the overwhelming majority gained by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party all but wiping away the nearly six decades of dominance by the Congress party which had shaped Delhi's bureaucratic landscape.

"Delhi's drawing room set, especially top government officials, are deeply suspicious of this new lot of power-wielders with whom they have little in common, let alone language," said Abhilasha Kumari, a New Delhi-based sociologist.

At his first meeting with the capital's top officials, Modi laid down new ground rules: Reduce delays, cut red tape and ensure greater accountability and efficiency. Other edicts: swift disposal of files, holding officials responsible for delays in decision-making, and limiting cushy post-retirement jobs for civil servants.

India's civil service, a collection of state and national agencies that totals some 6.5 million people, was the proud "steel frame" that helped govern the vast subcontinent

during British colonial rule. Families here dream of their children passing the rigorous entry examinations to join the exclusive ranks of civil servants. These days, though, it's also widely derided as a contributing factor in the country's sluggish economic growth, with widespread corruption and lack of expertise often masked by tedious rules and sheer inefficiency.

Modi made streamlining the bureaucracy a campaign platform, vowing "maximum governance and minimum government." He also said he wanted to restore a sense of pride to India's dejected millions, many of them battling unemployment and grinding poverty. One quick boost would be giving prominence to Hindi, the language of the masses.

So a day after the new government took office, India's home ministry ordered officials to switch to Hindi on social media. Modi also ordered officials to use Hindi in all official correspondence and to take notes in Hindi. Modi himself declared he would only speak Hindi with foreign leaders.

The changes have shaken the government's power managers.

The newly elected lawmakers "speak a different language and are socially conservative in their outlook," Kumari said. "Certainly, there is a sense of disquiet among the bureaucrats," she said. While Modi rarely speaks English in public, he is said to speak the language fairly well, even if he's not completely at ease. But in a country with as many as 22 official languages, many question Hindi's dominance.

Although Hindi and its numerous dialects are spoken by about 45 percent of India's 1.2 billion people, there are hundreds of millions in the southern, eastern and remote northeast parts of the country who don't speak Hindi at all. In recent years, as India has joined the globalized economy, English has become increasingly important beyond the urban elite. Today, about 10 percent of the country is thought to be proficient in English. For the senior civil servants, the sudden language shift is an added burden. "Most officials think in English. But if they have to translate documents, or write letters in Hindi, it would slow down the process," said Amitabha Pande, a retired civil servant. "In many ways it would be counter to what Modi set out to achieve - speeding up government functioning."

STATESMAN, JUN 17, 2014

No affidavits under UP govt

Lucknow, 16 June: Amidst reports that the Centre may discontinue with the attestation of documents by gazetted officers, UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav today decided to abolish the system of submitting affidavits while availing of benefits of government schemes and taking admission in academic institutions. "The CM has abolished the system of taking affidavits for all government schemes. The decision has been taken to provide relief to the people and simplify government processes," a spokesman said here.

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

HINDU, JUN 17, 2014

Priority ration cards to replace BPL cards

Changes as under National Food Security Act 2013

'Priority' and 'non-priority' ration cards will replace the below the poverty line (BPL) and above the poverty line (APL) ration cards respectively when new ration cards as mandated under the National Food Security Act 2013 are rolled out in the State in November. Henceforth, the eldest woman above the age of 18 years in the family will be the owner of the ration card .

Households with priority ration cards will get rice at Rs.3 a kg and wheat at Rs.2 a kg through ration shops. Non-priority ration card holders will have to purchase the rice and wheat at the present APL rate.

As per the Act, there is a provision for supply of one kg coarse grain, such as maize, per person through the ration shop. But, it will not be applicable for the State.

The State will have 48 per cent households with priority ration cards as per the census figures, official sources told *The Hindu* .

There will be a marginal dip in the total quantity of rice and wheat being provided as it will be for per person under the new system.

The Civil Supplies Department is gearing up to provide the new ration cards by November this year. The enumeration work will begin soon, the sources said.

If there are no women above 18 years in the family, the eldest male member in the house will be temporarily made the owner of the ration card.

- New cards to rolled out in the State in November
- Eldest woman in the family will be owner of ration card

PUBLISHING

TELEGRAPH, JUN 17, 2014

THE ONSET OF FEAR

The State must be seen to give protection from hooliganism

Prabhat Patnaik

Pusillanimity is in the air; and a section of the publishing industry is leading all others in practising it. Sometime ago Penguin India had withdrawn Wendy Doniger's book, *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, in an out-of-court settlement with an obscure outfit called "Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samiti", led by Dina Nath Batra, which had gone to court against the book. In a lame defence of its action, it had put the blame for it on Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code, which makes publishing a book that offends religious sentiments a criminal not a civil offence. Now, Orient Blackswan has followed the lead of Penguin India by capitulating to the same outfit, without putting up a fight.

Dina Nath Batra's lawyer sent a legal notice to Orient Blackswan on April 14, 2014, accusing them of publishing a book that was defamatory and derogatory to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The book in question was Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's *Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, which was a text book that had been in print for more than a decade and was described by the publisher as a "careful history, written in the best traditions of historical writing". While the company sent what they call "an appropriate reply" to the legal notice *on that book*, they decided to have a pre-release assessment of *all* books "that might attract similar reactions".

One of the books held up for such assessment is written by Megha Kumar, a brilliant young academic at Oxford who has recently completed her PhD from that university on a Rhodes Scholarship from India. It is called *Communalism and Sexual Violence: Ahmedabad since 1969*. It had been printed *and released*; nonetheless it is now set aside for re-review, in spite of having been already reviewed before its publication, and found scholarly enough to deserve to be published.

It may appear at first sight that this re-review is an innocuous affair, that a publishing company is merely taking routine precautions against possible legal action, which one should not cavil at. But the letter from the company to Kumar clearly states that the re-review is not concerned solely with the question of whether the book can cause legal proceedings. It says: "Quite apart from the legal proceedings, our concern is that our authors, our staff and the families of both, could be exposed to the risk of violence, endangering their life and safety."

In other words, the re-review would also take into account whether the book is going to annoy hooligans into perpetrating murder and mayhem on the author and the publishing staff. Of course, dragging in the author here is a fig leaf: authors are not little children who need to be protected by the publishers; most authors are perfectly capable of looking after their own safety. What the company is saying in effect is that they cannot publish a book if hooligans get after them for doing so.

This in fact is the real crux of what the company is saying. The reference to legal proceedings is a red herring. There is actually a technical difference between the Penguin India case and the one relating to Orient Blackswan. In the former, the issue related to section 295A of the IPC, which talks of hurt to *religious sentiments*. In the case of Orient Blackswan, the objection against the only book which has been actually targeted until now is *not that it hurts any religious sentiment but that it is derogatory and defamatory to the RSS*. Indeed, unlike Doniger's book that was about Hinduism, all the books of Orient Blackswan that are under scrutiny are marked by the common trait that *none of them deals with religion*. So the question of even attracting 295A simply does not arise.

True, they could attract defamation charges, but if the books are scholarly, which the pre-publication review must have established, then their assertions must be based on 'facts', in which case they are no more defamatory in a legal sense to anybody than the statement that the Manmohan Singh government was steeped in corruption is defamatory to Singh. So, the fear usually associated with attracting legal proceedings should not arise: section 295A does not apply to these books, and the charge of defamation can be countered with 'facts'. The publishers, in short, are simply withdrawing books in the name of re-review because they are worried that they would be attacked by hooligans for publishing them. They fear that the hooligans would consider them 'offensive', even though the scholarly merit of the books is not in doubt.

Ironically, Kumar's book cannot even be considered hostile to the Bharatiya Janata Party. It deals with the issue of violence against women during communal riots, taking into account three episodes in Ahmedabad. The first two occurred when the Congress was in power both at the Centre and in the state and the last occurred during Narendra Modi's tenure, in the aftermath of Godhra, when the Centre too had a BJP government. Kumar, in short, is not associating communal riots in the state with the fact of a BJP government being in office. BJP governments are not particularly singled out by her; so there is no reason for her to be attacked by the *Hindutva* forces. But the publishers think otherwise, and perhaps rightly so, since hooligans do not go by logic.

It is not clear how her publishers would find an honourable way out of the mess they have created for themselves. They cannot now suddenly announce that they *will* distribute the book as it is; for then Dina Nath Batra's outfit, even if it was oblivious of Kumar's book until the controversy arose, would move in with its objections; it will not let go a golden opportunity to raise a ruckus. They cannot publish the book with a few changes, for, even if that course was acceptable to all, the author, the publisher, and Dina Nath Batra, some new outfit, or even a splinter of Batra's outfit, can still rebel against this agreement and take on the role of hooligans in the new context. Batra, after all, does not have monopoly control over the hooligans. Willy-nilly, therefore, the publishers are likely to be pressed into withdrawing the book 'for good'. The logic of pusillanimity in the face of hooliganism may leave them little choice.

But why should one blame the publishers? One cannot, after all, take umbrage at the display of pusillanimity even if it leaves one dissatisfied. One cannot consider pusillanimity, even if dishonourable, to be immoral. It is unfair to expect of every

individual or entity that it should stand up to hooliganism disregarding the costs of doing so.

Indeed, the role of *the State* is precisely to ensure that individuals and entities, irrespective of the resources at their command, are protected against hooliganism. What the Orient Blackswan position reveals, apart from their own pusillanimity, which one cannot deny but should not decry, is their perception of the present Indian State. *They basically do not trust the present Indian State to protect them against attacks by a bunch of Hindutva hooligans.*

Can one blame them for this? There have been numerous incidents of *Hindutva* hooliganism since the new government took office at the Centre, the most notable being the murder of the Pune information technology professional, Mohsin Shaikh, by persons allegedly owing allegiance to the Hindu Rashtra Sena, and the attacks on bakeries and shops owned by the minority community that followed it. But there has been no word of condemnation from the prime minister of such hooliganism or even routine appeals to people elated over his victory to observe restraint. The *Hindutva* hooligans naturally feel emboldened that their day has arrived and that the State would henceforth turn a blind eye to their shenanigans. It is understandable if publishers fear that these shenanigans might be carried to their premises.

Just consider the contrast. The British *bourgeois* State provided security to Salman Rushdie *at its own expense* against the threat to his life, even though Rushdie had earlier been a strong Left-wing critic of that very State. Here in India the State cannot even be relied upon to protect a reputed publisher against the hooliganism of the supporters of those in power.

We can talk of India's emergence as a 'modern nation' till the cows come home; but it remains a chimera if the bourgeois State fails in its elementary duty of providing security against hooliganism. Likewise, we can talk of improving the quality of our higher education till the cows come home; but it remains a chimera if the brightest of our young academics cannot publish their research work in this atmosphere of fear.

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TAXATION

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JUN 17, 2014

Abolish revenue secretary post, says Shome panel

SUMMARYThe Parthasarathi Shome-led Tax Administrative Reforms Commission (TARC) has suggested a raft of measures, including avoidance of retrospective amendments in tax laws...

The Parthasarathi Shome-led Tax Administrative Reforms Commission (TARC) has suggested a raft of measures, including avoidance of retrospective amendments in tax laws, the abolition of the post of revenue secretary, setting up of a tax council and granting functional independence to tax dispute bodies, among others.

TARC was set up by former finance minister P Chidambaram in August 2013 to review tax laws and suggest ways for a stable and non-adversarial tax administration. The panel submitted its first report on May 30 this year. The report was put up on the finance ministry website on Monday to seek comments from public.

In terms of administrative structure and governance, TARC recommended that the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) should be merged within the next five years to form a common central board of direct and indirect taxes. “The post of revenue secretary should be abolished. The present functions of the department of revenue should be allocated to the two boards. This would empower the tax departments to carry out their assigned responsibilities efficiently,” TARC's report stated.

The panel also suggested setting up of a governing council, headed by chairperson of the two boards, by rotation, and with participation from outside experts, to oversee the functioning of the tax department and the setting up of an independent evaluation office (IEO) to monitor the performance of the tax administration. It also pitched for a 'tax council' to develop a common tax policy, analysis and legislation for both direct and indirect taxes. “The council will be headed by the chief economic adviser of the ministry of finance,” the report said.

For tax disputes, the panel suggested avoidance of any retrospective amendment in tax laws and adequate training for officers dealing with such disputes. “The current practice of raising demands irrespective of merits should be discontinued. Call book in CBEC should be abolished,” it said.

It also said that tax boards should immediately launch a special drive for review and liquidation of cases currently clogging the system by setting up dedicated task forces for that purpose. Such a review should be completed within a year. It called for disputes to get resolved within the set time-frame and advocated pre-dispute consultation among the stakeholders.

The panel suggested inclusion of wealth tax returns in IT returns, common returns for excise and service tax, better training for tax officers and faster refunds, among other recommendations.

“The recommendations should be considered as a package and not on a pick-and-choose mode. That would not work; it would be better to set aside the recommendations in toto and reconsider them at a future date when India may be ultimately ready to make serious changes that are needed but is not up to facing them as of now,” the report said.

TRANSPORT

HINDU, JUN 17, 2014

L-G approves formation of Delhi road safety committees

VISHAL KANT

A day after a traffic police constable was allegedly fatally knocked down by a motorist when he tried to stop his vehicle for checking, Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung on Monday approved the formation of district-level Road Safety Committees in Delhi.

The committees, which have been constituted under the provision of Section 215 of the Motor Vehicle Act 1988, will have the mandate to ensure a closer engagement of the local administration and the citizen with the issue of road safety, apart from identifying the black spots on the city roads and suggest remedial measures.

“Apart from the area District Magistrate and the Deputy Commissioner of Police, senior officers of other government agencies, including the civic bodies, have been made member of each committee.

The District Road Safety Committees will hold its meeting at least once in three months or as per requirement,” an official said.

Apart from identification of black spots on the roads and suggesting remedial measures, the other major roles of the committee include deployment of ambulances, development of trauma care and blood bank facility, enforcement of traffic regulation, creation of wayside amenities and checking the functioning of the district transport offices, officials said.

PIONEER, JUN 18, 2014

GOVT GREEN LIGHT TO E-RICK OPS IN CAPITAL

The battery-operated rickshaws were first introduced on Delhi’s roads in 2010 ahead of the Commonwealth Games, but it was only after four years that they were accorded legal status by the Government.

In a major policy decision, the Union Transport Ministry on Tuesday allowed the e-rickshaws to operate in the Capital, and also exempted them from prosecution under the Motor Vehicles Act.

This means, the e-rickshaws can no longer be prosecuted for traffic violations. Instead, a detailed policy will be framed for regulation of the battery-operated rickshaws and to ensure that they do not cause chaos on Delhi’s roads.

The decision is being seen as a political masterstroke as the BJP took advantage by offering relief to the rickshaw operators. Its rival Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the

Congress had been espousing the issue and demanding that the ban on e-rickshaws be revoked.

The move would bolster BJP's prospects in the Capital if it goes to re-election later this year. There are an estimated 1.5 lakh e-rickshaw operators and drivers in the Capital and they formed a major vote bank of the AAP in recent elections.

Announcing the decision, Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said that e-rickshaws with motor power till 650W would now be considered as non-motorised vehicles and hence they would require no licence to operate.

The decision would benefit over 1.5 lakh e-rickshaw operators in the national Capital whose fate was hanging in the balance in absence of a policy to regulate the battery operated rickshaws.

Addressing a rally of e-rickshaw owners and drivers at Ramlila Maidan, Gadkari said the Government was committed for betterment of the people from the lowest strata of society as he named the scheme after Deen Dayal Upadhyay. "Henceforth, the battery-operated rickshaws in India will be known as Deen Dayal Upadhyay e-rickshaws," Gadkari said.

The Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (MoRTH) had rendered e-rickshaws illegal via a notification issued on April 24 and since then uncertainty loomed large over the fate of its owners and drivers. According to earlier rules, three-wheeler vehicles with motor power less than 250W and speed less than 25kmph were regarded as non-motorised vehicles, but the amendment by recent notification to the Motor Vehicles Act withdrew this exemption.

Gadkari said that the Municipal Corporations in metropolitan cities and municipal councils and smaller cities would frame policy to regularize the e-rickshaws. The policy has to be framed in consultation with the local police so that the violations can be checked through prosecution. The e-rickshaws would be regularised with a fee of just Rs 100. "Owners of e-rickshaws have to get their vehicles registered with MCD with a fee of just Rs 100. After registering e-rickshaw, MCD will have to give identity cards to drivers so that they can easily earn their livelihood," the Transport Minister said.

The new rule also mandates that owners of the rickshaws will also have to be the driver of the vehicle and it will be ensured that these vehicles are not rented out. The move aims at abolishing the contract system or mafia who procure these vehicles and rent them out to the drivers. To enable the unemployed youth buy e-rickshaws, Gadkari said a loan at 3 per cent interest rate will be provided for which he has written to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. He said that with his announcement, around 2 crore people across the country will be benefited.

Gadkari further said that for their vehicle registration, the owners of e-rickshaws do not need to approach the Centre and the State Government and will have to only approach the MCD for getting their vehicles registered on their names. As per new rule, e-rickshaws registered with particular district will not be allowed to enter other districts. Drivers of such vehicle can also ferry luggage up to 50 kg with four persons. In the rally, BJP MPs Meenakshi Lekhi, Manoj Tiwari, Ramesh Bidhuri and MCD leaders also participated.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, JUN 17, 2014

Action plan for beautification of Delhi launched

NEW DELHI: Aiming to change the face of Delhi in six months time, government today launched an action plan promising enhancement of civic services and greenery in the capital city through coordinated efforts of all agencies including NDMC, MCD, CPWD and DDA.

Construction of bio-digester public toilets, conversion of Barapullah drain into a green zone, automatic washing machines at dhobi ghats, cleaning and lighting of public buildings and increasing the capacity of parking lots are some of the measures finalised at the marathon meeting attended by the top officials of all agencies concerned, Delhi government and DMRC here.

"We have finalised a detailed action plan to beautify the city and all agencies concerned have been given responsibilities to do it in a coordinated way," said Urban Development Secretary Sudhir Krishna after the meeting with all agencies involved in the exercise.

He said, "Delhi is beautiful and it has a lot of greenery. But we want it to be more beautiful and green."

Asked about the time frame and the cost involved in the beautification drive, Krishna said, "It is launched today and will take six months to complete the process. However, the drive will be reviewed every month."

On cost factor he said, "It does not require extra fund and the available resources will be utilised to meet the target."

According to the plan, cleaning of market places will be carried out on regular basis and all unauthorised road side kiosks will be removed.

"Steps will also be taken to construct porta cabins for security posts as part of the beautification drive," he said.

Currently, sand bags are being used for creation of security posts at roadside.

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has been given responsibility to decongest and beautify the entry and exit of Metro stations.

Besides, it will also take steps to paint the viaducts inside the station to improve the aesthetic look of the premises.

Krishna also said that clearance of garbage and construction wastes will be carried out on a faster way.

Urban Development Minister Venkaiah Naidu during a meeting with senior officials of the Ministry and CPWD last Friday had expressed concern over the condition of the capital city and directed the officials concerned to spruce up the metropolis to make it a world class city.

According to the finalised plan, civic agencies would construct bio-digester toilets at public places including markets. About 376 green toilets will be constructed across the city.

Desilting before the monsoon, repairing sidewalks, reconstruction of roads with potholes are to be taken up right away, UD secretary Sudhir Krishna said.

He said the Barapullah nullah will get a major boost as only treated water will be allowed to flow in the drain and tracks for cycling and walking will also be developed along the drain.

A massive tree plantation drive will also be carried out as part of the green drive.

Improving the looks walkways, roundabouts and central vista and maintenance of parks are some of the measures to be undertaken during the drive.

NDMC has been given responsibility to increase the parking lots' capacity.

Both MCD and NDMC have been asked to rejuvenate water bodies in their respective areas.

Krishna said, "While water bodies will be revived, steps will also be taken for the reuse of used water in gardening and washing purposes."

DECCAN HERALD, JUN 17, 2014

Delhi becomes first kerosene-free city in India

The Delhi Government Monday announced that the national capital has become the first 'kerosene-free city' in the country.

"With the successful implementation of 'Delhi: A Kerosene-Free City Scheme, 2012', no subsidised kerosene is being issued in the national capital and the country can save upto Rs 200 crores every year," said S S Yadav, Commissioner, Food Supply and Weights and Measures.

The scheme was launched in 2012 in collaboration with three Oil Marketing Companies

and Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for which Delhi Government had incurred an expenditure of Rs 62 crores.

Delhi was earlier getting about 53,000 Kilolitre of kerosene oil every year from the Centre, which was issued to eligible households at a subsidised rate. At the present market rate of the oil, it would have cost the government about Rs 200 crores per year as subsidy, Yadav said.

"Under the scheme, free gas connections along with LPG filled cylinders, two burner gas stove, regulator and suraksha pipe were issued to the Jhuggi Ration Card (JRC), Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antodaya Ann Yojana (AAY) ration card holders who were using kerosene oil for cooking," Yadav said.

A total 3.56 lakhs such ration card holders could benefit from the scheme but those families which already had an LPG connection were not eligible under it.

Yadav said the department received 2,14,149 applications for free gas connection under the scheme, of which 20,732 were rejected.

"Remaining families did not come forward to take benefit of the scheme because either they already had an LPG connection or they were not interested in the scheme either due to migration or other reasons," he said.

This step would help in environment conservation as no toxic fumes would emanate from burning the oil, lesser possibility of adulteration in petrol, beneficial impact on air pollution and improvement in the quality of life of people benefited under the scheme besides lesser fire accidents and burn injuries, Yadav said.

He said any person indulging in kerosene oil trade is liable for prosecution under Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and Delhi Kerosene Oil Control Order, 1962.

A complaint can be registered in this regard on the helpline number 1967, Yadav added.

WOMEN

HINDU, JUN 23, 2014

Standing up for women in a man's world

MYTHILI SUNDAR

Women in power should rise above political, caste and religious considerations and come together to form advocacy groups

RUN OUT: Women who complain of harassment at the workplace, violence at home or abuse in public often find themselves isolated. File picture of Preity Zinta at a match in Dharamshala. —**PHOTO:** PTI

The Preity Zinta-Ness Wadia episode has understandably evoked tremendous interest, with newspapers, television channels, social media and the film fraternity doing all they can to ensure that it remains in the limelight. There are accusations and counter-accusations, even revelations of alleged underworld involvement, as speculation on whether the actor was indeed abused by Mr. Wadia in public during an IPL match or is out to “seek attention” is rife.

The controversy has reinforced the fact that allegations of abuse of women are not restricted to the lower or middle strata of society. The fact that Ms Zinta is a successful actor and a co-owner of Kings XI Punjab, and the person who allegedly abused her is not only a wealthy businessman but also belongs to an illustrious family, has made the episode, the likes of which are quite common, exceptionally interesting. It has also driven home the point that empowered and educated women are equally vulnerable to abuse, and ugly scenes can unfold in elite cricket stands too.

Media commentators and talk show participants often refer to the “patriarchal mindset” to explain crimes against women — from abuse and harassment at the workplace to gang rape. They argue that the social environment is determined by this mindset and any woman who challenges it has to necessarily “bear the brunt.” Khap panchayats, honour killings and domestic violence thus enjoy social sanction with women passively perpetrating, even if not actively encouraging, them.

So, does the explanation begin and end with the patriarchal mindset? What about women's thinking? The clamour for women's reservation in legislatures is increasing by the day. It has been on the nation's agenda for close to two decades and one hopes it will become a reality soon. But of what use can such reservation be if women continue to be conditioned by patriarchal values and refuse to challenge them?

Mulayam Singh's infamous “boys will be boys, they make mistakes” comment in the context of rape was widely criticised by the media, the intelligentsia, and even the United Nations. But Dimple Yadav, his daughter-in-law who represents his party in Parliament, did not (or could not) express her outrage openly. Some media reports even quoted her as saying that such remarks were made by a lot of people and were quite common.

Do women really work to change things around them, at home or work? “No” seems to be the answer, looking at the increasing instances of crime against women. Questioning abuse and crimes is left to a few organisations and the National Commission for Women. While the blanket reasoning that most women cannot oppose the system they live in as they are not empowered may explain their behaviour, it cannot become a refuge for continued inaction on their part, certainly not if they want to make an impact on decision-making.

Speaking up

Unfortunately, even educated and empowered women do not speak up when they should because they either conform to the patriarchal system or are indifferent to it as long as it suits them or does not affect them personally. Women who complain of harassment at the workplace, violence at home or abuse in public thus find themselves isolated. Many treat such instances casually because abuse of women in day-to-day life — verbal, physical and emotional — is not seen as something out of the ordinary. Even in extreme cases such as incest, very few women encourage the victim to speak out or support her. By submitting to the so-called patriarchal set-up, are women opting for the easy way out? True, things cannot change overnight but women can make a beginning — take that one small step which can make a difference. We often read of women and young girls who stop child marriages in their villages. While they may not have revolutionised the way society functions, they have surely done their bit to make the world a better place to live in. Ayesha Takia was quick to express her disapproval of her politician father-in-law Abu Azmi’s remark on rape, which sent a strong signal to her family and the nation. Had it not been for women who constitute 50 per cent of the population, programmes like family planning and adult literacy would not have succeeded to the extent they did.

Standing up to a husband or son who opposes a girl for marrying outside her caste, coming to the help of a woman who is harassed in her workplace or publicly humiliated, reporting a case of domestic violence in the neighbourhood or forming a pressure group to say ‘no’ to oppressive instruments like khap panchayats will go a long way in challenging the social order. Remaining passive out of fear or convenience, and blaming it on the man’s world will just not do. As Madeleine Albright said: “There is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women.”

Women in power should rise above political, caste and religious considerations and come together to form advocacy groups. If they continue to toe or accept their party line blindly, they will add only to the numbers, not quality, in the legislature. The onus is on educated and empowered women to challenge discrimination.

While it may not be the best of examples, it may be worthwhile to recall the case of Akku Yadav, a notorious gangster of Nagpur, who was lynched by a group of women in the district court premises in 2004. Yadav had raped many women and murdered at least three of them in the Kasturba Nagar slum and the police had done virtually nothing to rein him in. On the fateful day, about 200 women attacked him and hacked him to death. Writing on the incident, *The Guardian* (September 16, 2005) said: “ ...Yadav and his

gang had terrorised the 300 families of Kasturba Nagar for more than a decade ... every woman living in the slum has claimed responsibility for the murder. They have told the police to arrest them all.” The trial in the case is on.

Change begins at home

What can be done to dent the rigid frame of patriarchal values? A change in thinking should begin at home. Girls should be encouraged to speak, ask questions. Schools should include in their curriculum lessons on equal treatment of boys and girls. They should conduct activities encouraging equal participation. Stereotypes should be broken and boys should be sensitised on gender issues. Even if the programmes succeed marginally, the impact will be huge in the long run.

In the dramatic climax of Ketan Mehta’s *Mirch Masala* , a group of women charge with fury at the *subedar* waiting outside a masala factory for Sonbai — a village woman he has set his eyes on — and throw heaps of freshly ground chilli powder on his face. The *subedar* , who threatened the villagers to hand over Sonbai to him or face the consequences, is subdued by the women folk who are shown metamorphosing from the timid weaker sex — who initially implore Sonbai to submit to the *subedar* so that they are spared — into a determined lot, set to teach their tormentor a lesson. In one stroke, the film reduces the men of the village, including the chief, to a bunch of bystanders with women showing the way. Reel and real life are not too far apart.

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