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CIVIL SERVICE

TIMES OF INDIA, JUN 23, 2015

MHA rejects govt stand on home secretary

NEW DELHI: The Union home ministry has reportedly reiterated its stand on the appointment of Delhi's home secretary to chief secretary KK Sharma. In the ongoing letter wars between the state, LG and Centre, MHA's latest communication came last week as a counter to a communication from the Kejriwal government where the latter made the point that the state has the power to remove IAS officer Dharampal as home secretary.

The home ministry has rejected the state's view citing constitutional provisions and transaction of business rules that the ministry was the boss in the matter.

In the latest strongly-worded letter to the chief secretary, the MHA through a joint secretary has stated that removal of the home secretary and secretary in-charge of land and building has to be done by the state after consulting with the ministry. It has also rejected the state's argument that there have been precedents where home secretaries have been appointed by the state and approval of MHA sought later.

The recent round of letter exchanges happened after the lieutenant governor appointed joint commissioner of police M K Meena as the ACB chief and Dharampal notified the order in the capacity of home secretary. The state had moved to remove Dharampal for notifying the order without consulting the CM. The government also held to its stand that none but additional commissioner of police SS Yadav was the ACB chief as there was no post of joint commissioner of police in ACB. Kejriwal then handed over Dharampal's charge to principal secretary Rajendra Kumar.

Meanwhile, tension has been brewing as the two home secretaries are struggling to assert their authority. IAS officer Dharampal, who is holding charge in keeping with the LG's directions, is keeping a vigil on file movement ensuring that no documents are taken away by anyone without his approval from his office. However, the CM's chosen official Rajendra Kumar is learnt to be processing files that were on the way last week.

TIMES OF INDIA, JUN 23, 2015

Be punctual or face action: Govt warns employees

NEW DELHI: One year into the Modi regime whose inauguration saw improved punctuality in government offices, things seems to have slipped back forcing the government to warn that truancy would be punished.

In a communication to all the central government ministries on Monday, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) emphasized : "Habitual late attendance is viewed as conduct unbecoming of a government servant and disciplinary action may be taken against such a government servant. It is also added that punctuality in attendance is to be observed by government servants at all levels".

Modi government's advent saw a huge jump in punctuality with Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself along with his ministers leading by example and the introduction of bio-metric attendance system facilitating tracking of those playing truant.

Given that background, the stern communication on Monday led many to wonder whether old habits resurfaced after a year of enforced punctuality which caused resentment among employees and is believed to have led to large sections of employees to vote against the BJP in Delhi polls in February. People also speculated whether the awe that new regime inspired had begun to wear thin, encouraging people to switch back to old ways.

"Service rules stipulate that every government servant shall at all times maintain devotion to duty," DoPT emphasized, stressing that this was not the first time employees had been told to respect timings. "Responsibility for ensuring punctuality in respect of their employees rests within ministries, departments or offices," the missive said.

There are about 48 lakh central government employees working across the country.

It also said that the Aadhaar-enabled bio-metric attendance system (AEBAS), meant to replace the manual system of marking of attendance, were required to be installed in central government offices, including attached and subordinate offices, where they are not in use.

"There have been instances of tardiness by employees in coming to offices. The ministries have been asked to ensure that all employees mark their attendance through the

biometric system and take action against habitual offenders," a senior DoPT official said.

A website---www.attendance.gov.in--has also been made functional to give details of registered employees and those present in the offices on daily basis.

There were 1,29,895 registered employees of which 62,761 were present on Monday, according to the website.

However, DoPT said that the biometric attendance system is only an enabling platform and there is no change in the instructions relating to office hours, late attendance etc, the order said.

As per existing instructions, half-a-day's casual leave should be debited for each day of late attendance, but late attendance up to half an hour, on not more than two occasions in a month, and for justifiable reasons may be condoned by the competent authority.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 18, 2015

Civil service exams: Foster the courage to dream and succeed
Rajani Kant Verma

A successful civil service is one that has the courage to abandon failed models of 'good governance' and is not shy of taking politically uncomfortable measures in the interests of public good. It is not scared of innovations and is committed to devising novel ways and means to ensure development.

While it is necessary to give extraordinary latitude to the civil services, one cannot ignore the agencies that are responsible for overseeing and examining the policies and actions of civil servants. It is also expected that such an appraisal shall not lose sight of what is perceived as acceptable.

The agencies that keep a watch over the actions and conduct of a government, including the civil services, are the first responders to any crisis. They must be respected for countering and resolving undesirable consequences. We seldom acknowledge the services for their valuable advice, aimed at improving governance.

However, restraint and respect for each other's commitment is important; we must avoid reading between the lines into each other's acts and jumping to conclusions. Serving the

people is the mandate of every government, and it is expected besides many other responsibilities to act as agents of change.

No one disagrees with the need for scrutiny in our decision-making and delivery mechanisms, lest we digress from our goals. However, we cannot forget that the government and civil services are accountable to the people. We should open ourselves to scrutiny by neutral and objective experts, so that we can expose the shortcomings to make way for the best practices. This will help to ensure that we strive for what we stand for.

The myriad complexities that need to be addressed while ensuring public welfare is not only a daunting task that calls for careful choices but also a scrutiny of outcomes by experts.

Unfortunately, for the scrutiny of public administration there are no broad spectrum tests that could diagnose and cure all ills. Specifics are of the essence, and so is the knowledge of compulsions and the sensibilities of public service.

Any appraisal devoid of this milieu could at best be a polemic on procedural infirmities. We must not, for the love of our continuity of traditions trust the Northern Star alone for navigation, when better devices to find and secure the right direction are available.

The government and civil services should be open to all scrutiny and appraisal but we must remember that such acts are a means to an end. These should not be for fault-finding and witch-hunting, rather it is about ensuring the best without getting bogged down by needless procedural niceties.

We should support audit and scrutiny, which adds new dimensions and imparts wisdom to maximise gains, rather than pronouncing guilt. It is high time we shed the shackles of our colonial hangover, and realised that scrutiny and appraisal of public affairs is not all about culprits and casualties, and instead ought to be for education, training, advice, counsel, wisdom, the freedom to experiment and for promoting and perpetuating innovation and modern practices and to prevent disasters and tragedy rather than counting the dead.

A good system of checks and balances must not devolve into a blame game, rather, it should foster the courage to dare, dream and succeed.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 19, 2015

MEA plans to hire people from academia, private sector

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has decided to focus on improving its talent base by recruiting people from the private sector and academia to keep pace with changing manpower requirements.

Foreign secretary S Jaishankar and other top MEA officials told the standing committee on external affairs on Thursday that the ministry would advertise for positions in its public policy division to draw talent from the academic world and the private sector.

“Though there is lateral recruitment from the army and other such organisations into the MEA, this is for the first time it plans to advertise seeking talent from outside government,” said Shashi Tharoor, committee chairman and former minister of state. “Good 2 let new thinking into MEA,” he later tweeted.

The public policy division’s mandate has been expanded of late to include counter-terrorism and global cyber issues and act as a think tank plus back-room department for major foreign policy initiatives and visits. Ministry sources say the new hires could be assigned to other divisions, too.

India has 182 missions (high commissions and embassies) and posts (consulates and assistant high commissions) across the world but only 917 Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers. The MEA has total staff strength of 4,024, which includes interpreters and officials working in divisions such as legal and treaties.

China has over 4,000 career diplomats, Japan 5,000 and Brazil 1,300. The US has 11,000 foreign service officials.

CONSTITUTIONS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 16, 2015

Of rights and democracy: The Magna Carta's principles still work
Faizan Mustafa

The worst rulers have contributed to the making of the best of the laws. King John of England, who had many vices and abused his powers in every possible way, is to be credited for agreeing at Runnymede, maybe reluctantly, to the Magna Carta on June 15, 1215 — 800 years ago. Just 3,600 Latin words and 63 clauses written on stretched and dried sheepskin called parchment have changed the course of history. It was the first charter to be granted through force, by an English monarch.

Prior to the Magna Carta there was no law other than custom. There was no Parliament and no fundamental rights. With the Magna Carta, the foundation of the rule of law as opposed to the rule laid down by an individual, the king, was laid. For the first time limitations on the powers of the king (or State) were recognised and thus constitutionalism was born.

The Magna Carta has been the inspiration for most modern constitutions though in real terms it had talked of the rights of barons rather than ordinary people. Having a constitution in itself is not of much value as it may be devoid of constitutionalism. Hitler did have a Weimar Constitution. Constitutionalism is the antithesis of arbitrariness and is an idea of limited government.

Borrowing from the Magna Carta the main purpose of drafting our Constitution was to limit the power of government. Governmental power should not in itself be destructive of the values it was intended to promote. The Fundamental Rights, under the Indian Constitution, thus do the sacred function of limiting the power of the 'State' from where the greatest threat to such rights comes. The other institutional methods of limiting the power are to be found in the doctrines of the distribution of powers, separation of powers, and judicial review.

The Constitution, rather than protecting fundamental rights and civil liberties, has been used to establish a new structure of governmental power. Like it or not, power rather than

the Constitution has become supreme — it has always been so and will continue to be so in most democracies.

The Constitution has become an instrument of power rather than one of limitations. Our politicians have indeed ganged up against the people, the ‘sovereign masters’ of this country. Criticism of the government is understood as sedition or treason. We continue to have draconian laws under which people can be arrested and denied bail and protection of ordinary laws. Parliament has not codified its privileges. If people write or speak against Parliament or state legislatures, they are hauled up for the breach of legislative privileges. Similarly, if we criticise a decision of the court, we could be hauled up for contempt.

It’s true that all societies have been authoritarian; governments more so. Just like the previous Congress governments, the BJP government’s one-year performance too, from the perspective of constitutionalism, is disturbing. Constitutionalists are apprehensive that under the new dispensation we would further tilt towards authoritarianism. Let the Magna Carta remind the government of its promise of ‘minimum government, maximum governance’.

(Faizan Mustafa is vice-chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. The views expressed are personal)

CORRUPTION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 16, 2015

Delhi: Kejriwal's top bureaucrat faces corruption charges

A senior officer who had a bitter public falling out with the Delhi government has accused CM Arvind Kejriwal's secretary Rajendra Kumar of setting up private firms and awarding them contracts worth more than Rs 50 crore without calling bids.

In his complaint to the city's anti-corruption branch Monday, Ashish Joshi, thrown out by the Delhi government in April, accused the most powerful and influential officer in the Kejriwal government of empanelling his companies with a PSU and awarding them government works over a period of 12 years, beginning 2002.

"We have received a complaint and will follow the procedure. The law will take its own course," ACB chief MK Meena said.

Rajendra, whose recent appointment as the home secretary by the Delhi government has set off another round of wrangling with the Centre, did not respond to calls or messages.

According to sources, joint commissioner of police Meena, whose appointment by lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung was bitterly opposed by the Delhi government, has marked Joshi's complaint to an ACB inspector. No FIR has been registered,

"The modus operandi was simple: Form a company, get it empanelled with a PSU and then give orders to the PSU which in turn gets the work done through the empanelled company. It is understood that IT related work... for more that Rs 50 crore were got done through this modus operandi," said Joshi, who served as the chief digitisation officer of the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board.

When Rajendra was director (education), he had an office superintendent, Ashok Kumar, who quit in 2009 and went on to set up energy, education and real estate firms between 2009 and 2014, documents in possession of HT show.

Rajendra's relatives were board members in many of these companies. Both Ashok and Rajendra have known each other for decades. They were schoolmates in Bihar, the documents show.

Ashok, who operates out of neighbouring Noida, denied the allegations. "I have absolutely no knowledge of what the different officials in the government, including Kumar, would have ordered in their official capacity," he said.

The work orders were given when Rajendra was IT, health secretary, Transco CMD and VAT commissioner, Joshi said.

Most of the companies shared addresses and directors. "It is learnt that some common directors are relatives of Rajendra," Joshi said.

Ashok, however, told HT in an email that "neither Rajendra Kumar nor any of his relatives is a director or share holder in any of the company that I am a director or shareholder of".

Joshi told HT that the ACB authorities had given him a copy of the complaint's receipt. "They are examining it. I have more documents to prove my allegations and will show them next time," said the Indian Post and Telecommunication Finance Service officer, who is now back with the Centre. He served the Delhi government from July 2014 to April 2015.

The Centre and Delhi government are fighting a bitter turf war over appointment of officers, routing of files and control of police.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS STANDARD, JUN 22, 2015

NITI Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Pangariya to get Cabinet minister's rank and pay

The revised status will allow Arvind Panagariya to attend Cabinet meetings
Sanjeeb Mukherjee

To clear the air over the status of top officials in NITI Aayog, the government is all set to elevate its Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya's rank as well as pay scale to that of a Cabinet minister, as was the case with all deputy chairmen of the erstwhile Planning Commission. At present, Panagariya enjoys the rank of the Cabinet minister, but it is of nominal nature and not functional, called 'limited to warrant of precedence', in technical parlance, which entitles him a salary of the Cabinet Secretary.

The new status would not only allow Panagariya to attend Cabinet meetings, but will also define the line of hierarchy within the Aayog as well as the government. The decision has been taken after long deliberations between the government and Panagariya over the issue and a communication from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is expected to be issued soon. Alongside, the rank and pay of the two members - eminent economist Bibek Debroy and scientist V K Saraswat would be equated with those of a minister of state, officials said. Again, these two members currently enjoy the rank of ministers of state, but that is limited to warrant of precedence. They get the salary of secretary in the Union government.

LEADING A CHANGE

NITI Aayog vice-chairman to get rank and pay of Cabinet minister

New status will enable him to attend Cabinet meetings as a special invitee

At present, he is in the rank of Cabinet minister, limited to warrant of precedence, which means ceremonial

All deputy chairmen of the now defunct Planning Commission, were of Cabinet rank for actual purpose

Members of the NITI Aayog will be of the rank and status of ministers of state at the Centre

In the Planning Commission, all the members were of the rank of a minister of state, both in terms of pay scale and all other purposes, which placed them over the member-secretary or secretary. In NITI Aayog, there is no member-secretary but chief executive

officer Sindhushree Khullar enjoys the rank and pay scales equivalent to that post.

The new status for Panagariya means that from now on, the vice-chairman will effectively participate in all the Cabinet meetings as a special invitee. "The changes reflect the importance and clout that NITI Aayog is being given in the new government," said a senior official.

Previously in Planning Commission, then deputy chairman [Montek Singh Ahluwalia](#) attended the meetings of the Union Cabinet as a special invitee. Insiders said his views were sought on matters of national importance. A similar role is now being envisaged for the Aayog as well. As the pay-scale and allowances of the vice-chairman are similar to those of the Cabinet secretary, those of the members are akin to a secretary in the Union government. This, some officials said, has created a lot of confusion and disturbed smooth operation against the earlier practice in the [Planning Commission](#) where the vice-chairman held the rank of a Cabinet minister in all respects.

One of the reasons cited for equating Panagariya's pay and allowances to the Cabinet secretary and not to the Cabinet minister so far is not to let him feel he is getting very less salary against what he used to receive as a professor at the Columbia University.

A Cabinet minister in the Union government draws a salary of Rs 50,000 a month, on which additional allowances are added. Some of these allowances might not come to Panagariya, because these are given to them by virtue of being a member of Parliament. For instance, the minister gets Rs 2,000 a day or Rs 60,000 a month as the constituency allowance. The government has told Panagariya this specifically in its deliberations with him.

A Cabinet secretary draws a basic pay of around Rs 90,000 pm, while a secretary gets somewhere around Rs 80,000 in a month.

The NITI or the National Institution for Transforming India, was created after abolishing the decades-old Planning Commission of India with the objective of giving a new direction, thought and focus to policy making and also to make it act as a platform for states to have a meaningful interaction with the Central government.

Since its formation on January 1, 2015, the Aayog has set up a task force of chief ministers on a number of issues, which include elimination of poverty, restructuring of centrally sponsored schemes, Swatch Bharat Mission and skill development.

TELEGRAPH, JUN 16, 2015

Reforms and India: The challenges before the great Indian promise

Ashok Sekhar Ganguly

Indians grow up in families, with the habit of living within one's means. There is nothing unusual or unique about this way of life, especially across the Indian middle class.

The fairly widespread practice of living beyond one's means is prevalent amongst the post-depression/post-war generation in developed societies. For example, in the developed world, the purchasing of a dwelling is normally financed with a mix of loans and mortgages. Similarly, people have access to credit in day-to-day living. There is, however, no empirical evidence to suggest that living beyond one's means eventually helps the transition of a developing economy into a developed one.

These thoughts arise from the unending debates regarding near and long term prospects of the Indian economy. The basic issues go well beyond the Reserve Bank of India's inflation targeting, its interest rate policy or the current anxiety regarding the delay in the onset of the southwest monsoon as well as its prospects after it commences.

The terms, reforms and development, need to be seen in the Indian context. Independent India's political history was based on its leadership's core commitment to development within the country's means, as reflected in the annual budgets and five-year plans. Our historical commitment was the primacy of the State as a principal vehicle for investment, production, employment generation, balance of trade and regulatory controls.

Since vast numbers of Indians are poor, quite legitimately, one of the principal priorities of the State continues to be to provide succour and relief and help the poor to rise into a more assured and sustainable level of livelihood.

These policies served their purpose for a fairly long period. However, the need to change and reform these policies gradually became evident. The critical importance and urgency of economic reforms had reached a tipping point in 1991, which led to a cascade of overdue policy changes. In retrospect, it was a *force majeure* of an unprecedented economic and financial crisis. Since then the underlying sentiments regarding the benefits of reforms have remained strong, if not always in deeds then at least in words.

After 1991, the need for reforms gained a strong political and social currency in defining India's destiny across the country and abroad. Incidentally, the 1991 reforms have been taken advantage of by some Indian states more than others, for reasons which are reasonably well known. But those reforms spurred India to move on.

Over the years, India's population has kept outpacing economic growth as well as the distribution of wealth amongst our people. Simultaneously, the allocation of funds and evolution of new schemes to improve the lot of the underprivileged have also grown significantly.

In spite of the best efforts and declared commitments of the political leadership in power, actual reforms and potential for reforms in India have remained a conundrum. This raises an unasked question: does India have the urge and ability to pursue reforms in the absence of a crisis?

The challenges and choices between several social and economic priorities of our country are numerous and complex. Recently a former civil servant, whom I have known and who had a great task driven track record and a rewarding career, tried to articulate why change in India is slower than expectations. He said the civil service is uncompromisingly committed to serve the government in power, in administering its policies and programmes diligently and resolutely. He then went on to add that the service also has an inherent responsibility to fulfil its duty towards the nation. The balance between service and duty, and how these eventually influence policy outcome, indeed could be one of the critical factors in the pace of change in India.

The recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission to the Central government to devolve more financial share to the states can be proverbial but, as yet, a very faint light at the end of the tunnel. Whether different state governments in turn empower the urban municipalities, district administrations, the *zilla parishads* and panchayats by allocating them more resources to enable them to accelerate the speed of implementation of various schemes remains to be seen.

India has progressed impressively since 1991. India's growth and advancement have come from the combined efforts of all the sectors, ranging from agriculture to industry, to innovators, entrepreneurs and the self-employed. There have been periods of slowdown, primarily due to the vagaries of the annual monsoon and more recently due to uncertainties of the world economy.

India's potential, its domestic hopes as well as global expectations as an economic engine will continue to remain focused on how India drives transformation through speedier reforms. The need and obligations of close to half of India's people who remain poor can only be successfully tackled by speeding up reforms for faster and more reliable economic activity. India's priorities for healthcare, education, social security and employment generation will continue to remain a national commitment. The pressures for change could be reaching a crisis stage, needing a second bout of reforms.

The urgency to overcome the apprehensions regarding reforms has become even more acute in order to resolutely deal with several other major threats India faces, such as China's expansionism, terrorism in and from our neighbourhood, China's plan for the diversion of the Tibetan ice melt and its adverse impact on the Narmada and the north-

eastern states of India as well as the reality and impact of global warming on India's long-term agro-climate and on our food and water security.

The daily comments in Indian and world media tend to overlook the serious issues and the reality of the Indian challenge. The short-term analysis and clamour for reforms tend to ignore the foundational challenges to deliver the great Indian promise.

EDUCATION

TIMES OF INDIA, JUN 23, 2015

Cabinet approves varsity status for NSIT

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government cabinet has passed a proposal to upgrade Netaji Subhas Institute of Technology (NSIT) to the university level. This will be the second engineering institute under Delhi University, a Centre-run body, to be upgraded, the first being Delhi Technological University (formerly Delhi College of Engineering).

The reasons for upgrading NSIT state that the academic institution will promote undergraduate and postgraduate education, continuing education, training and research in engineering, technology, sciences, humanities and social sciences and management. Also, multi-level entry vertically and a system of flexible migration in the disciplines horizontally within or beyond the university will be allowed. The varsity will even promote education programmes with industry and R&D organizations for offering tailor-made courses "keeping in view societal needs."

Apart from adding another feather in the cap of Delhi government, upgrading of the institute's status to a university will considerably increase the intake of students at UG, PG and PhD levels over a period of time (approximately 12,000 students on the campus as against strength of around 3,500 at present). The move will also increase opportunities of Delhi-based students who otherwise have to seek education avenues outside. It will also create of a much larger pool of competent faculty, professional engineers and researchers, which make a significant contribution towards making Delhi the 'Technological Capital' of India.

Established in 1983 by the then Delhi administration as Delhi Institute of Technology, it was granted administrative autonomy in 1986 to manage the affairs of the institute effectively. The ultimate goal was to make it a university. The name of Delhi Institute of Technology was changed to Netaji Subhas Institute of Technology on February 13, 1997.

The Delhi government said that budgetary allocation to the education sector is to go up significantly. The government is also working on a draft bill to create a system to regulate fee structures of schools and it was brought up before the cabinet on Monday. The bill was expected to be introduced this session, but following reservations over certain clauses it has been withheld.

TRIBUNE, JUN 17, 2015

Ph.D papers, publication of articles in research journals for a price

Sunit Dhawan

Rohtak has become quite student-friendly, thanks to the emergence of “education shops” offering readymade and tailor-made research packages.

The operators of these establishments sell research synopses, M.Phil and M.Tech dissertations as well as Ph.D theses. They also offer to get research articles published in national and international journals for a price.

Inquiries made by The Tribune at such shops revealed the prices they charge for their services. While some operators entertain customers only on reference, certain others are quite forthcoming and straightforward.

This correspondent approached one such establishment as a decoy customer and sought help in preparing a synopsis for a Ph.D degree in public administration. The shop operator demanded the topic of research and quoted a price of Rs 8,000 for the synopsis. Further inquiries revealed that M.Phil and M.Tech dissertations were priced between Rs 25,000 and Rs 30,000; and Ph.D theses were available for Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000.

One such operator offered that he would get research papers/articles published in national/international research journals.

“If you give us the research paper/article, we will get it published for Rs 1,500. However, if you don’t have one, we will get it written and published for Rs 4,000,” he maintained.

Sources maintained that earlier, such operators functioned in the garb of photostat/computer-typing establishments and college/university teachers used to send aspiring research scholars to them. Now, certain operators have begun functioning independently and have even put up advertising boards and banners.

Some such establishments have cropped up bang opposite the MDU Gate and at a stone’s throw from the local residence of the state Finance Minister.

However, the government functionaries as well as university authorities seem to be oblivious of their existence. Dr Gulshan Taneja, Director of the Internal Quality

Assurance Cell (IQAC) at MDU, said the matter would be taken up with the university committee on research activities and other appropriate authorities.

HINDU, JUN 17, 2015

Common recruitment board for varsities mooted

SUMIT BHATTACHARJEE

Committee constituted to make amendments in University Act



The State government is planning to make some amendments in the University Act to make the State-run institutions more viable, more self-sufficient, and more competitive in an environment where private universities play a major role. A major change being contemplated is the setting up of a common university recruitment board, which would take up recruitment of the faculty members and staff for the universities.

A committee, comprising former Vice-Chancellors and professors, has been constituted to study and make necessary recommendations for the changes in the Act.

It is learnt that establishment of a recruitment board on the lines of the APPSC is being deliberated.

All the 13 State-run universities are suffering from serious shortage of faculty.

Vice-Chancellors welcome establishment such a board.

“It will allow the VCs to function more freely,” Vice-Chancellor (in-charge) of Krishna University, Machilipatnam, Suryachandra Rao, has said. “Recruitment of faculty has been a headache for the VCs. The process has been dominated by various influences. If a board is constituted, it will relieve the VCs from a major controversial job so that they can focus on other aspects,” he says.

Expressing a similar opinion, AU Vice-Chancellor G.S.N. Raju suggests that the recruitment board comprise eminent former professors and be part of the APSCHE.

AU is facing serious faculty crunch. Though the requirement is 1,050 teaching staff, it has been managing with just 450. Similar is the case with ANU in Guntur, which is short by over 50 per cent of its requirement.

ELECTRICITY

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUN 18, 2015

Fine discoms for power cuts, Delhi tells regulator

Satyendra Jain said the government has told DERC to include a penalty clause where discoms will be liable to pay Rs 50 per hour per household for the first two hours of outage.

The Delhi government has asked the city's power regulator to make discoms pay a penalty on an hourly basis in case outages exceed an hour. It also told the regulator that the penalty amount should be adjusted in the consumer's bill.

Delhi Power Minister Satyendra Jain on Wednesday said the government has told the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) to include a penalty clause where discoms will be liable to pay Rs 50 per hour per household for the first two hours of outage. He said if the power cut exceeded two hours, then the discom will be made to pay Rs 100 per hour till it restores supply.

"Currently, in case of a power cut, any penalty is determined by the data available at the end of one month. To make things more simple and effective, we have written to the DERC about introducing a penalty clause on an hourly basis," Jain said.

The minister added that any penalty amount should be adjusted in the bill within three months from the date of the penalty. However, in case of planned outages, for the purposes of repair and maintenance, discoms should inform consumers 15 days in advance.

The government has written to the DERC under Section 108 of the Electricity Act, 2003, where it can direct the power regulator "on policy matters".

"The government has the right to direct the DERC under this section. We hope the DERC takes up the matter and the penalty clause is implemented within a week," a ministry official said.

The move comes after a warning from Delhi government to discoms, telling them to ensure uninterrupted power supply or else face action. With peak demand expected to touch 6,500 MW, discoms have assured the government that they have enough power to supply the city.

Outages, however short, remain frequent in many parts of Delhi.

HOUSING

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 17, 2015

New law framed to do away with tenancy troubles, rental housing all set to grow
Moushumi Das Gupta, Hindustan Times, New Delhi

Landlords need no longer fear squatting tenants and those living in rented accommodation should not be constantly afraid of untimely eviction as interests of both parties will be safeguarded in a bold tenancy law drafted by the Union government.

The housing and urban poverty alleviation ministry has readied the draft of the Model Tenancy Bill, 2015, doing away with some archaic rules that govern this sector. The draft will soon go to the cabinet for its approval.

It proposes an independent authority for registration of all tenancy agreements and a separate court for resolving disputes, a major problem in a country where thousands of rent-related litigations are pending in courts.

Realty experts said the move would encourage rental housing, a key component of the NDA government's flagship scheme — housing for all by 2022 — likely to come up for cabinet approval on Wednesday.

“This will unlock a huge amount of rental stock into the market as more property owners will be encouraged to rent houses. Currently, not many property owners rent out properties and primarily fall back on property appreciation because the rental yield is very low (about 1-2%) and there is always the fear of the tenant not moving out after the lease has expired,” said Anshuman Magazine, chairman and MD of CBRE South Asia Pvt Ltd.

The proposed legislation has been given the “model” tag to let states have the option of adapting or rejecting it because land is a state subject.

“Currently, almost all states have their own rent laws. But many of them have become archaic and failed to serve their purpose. The opaqueness has not only made renting out properties a tricky affair for landlords but taking a house on rent has become a nightmarish experience too. Many tenants are forced to cough up arbitrary rent hikes or face eviction,” said an official.

WHAT IT MEANS The Model Tenancy Act, 2015 is expected to be sent for cabinet approval shortly

FOR TENANTS

- Rent ceiling to be fixed, agreement to spell out annual increase
- No arbitrary eviction as agreement will mention rent period
- Can claim rent reduction in case of deterioration of services
- Security deposit won't exceed three times the monthly rent

FOR LANDLORDS

- Rent ceiling, fixed by states, to be linked to inflation
- Tenancy to cease immediately on death of tenant
- Can terminate tenancy for non-payment of rent or misuse of property after giving a month's notice

Legal experts welcomed the draft law, too. “This is a good legislation that seeks to set up a special court to address tenant and landlord-related cases. The present statutes do not provide any protection to the landlord in terms of compensation if the tenant does not vacate the premises in time,” said Sunil Tyagi, senior partner, ZEUS Law, a corporate-commercial law firm.

The law will allow landlords to charge rents — to be decided by respective state governments — on a par with market rates. States would also have the power to put a cap on rent rates to check arbitrary hikes.

The move will bring relief to landlords of old properties in many cities, including Delhi, saddled with tenants who have been paying rents fixed over six decades ago.

There are safeguards for tenants as well. They won't have to live in the fear of getting evicted at the whims of the landlord.

“All tenancies entered into after the commencement of the act shall be for a period as agreed between the landlord and the tenant and as specified in the tenancy agreement,” the draft law states.

It says that no one can let out or take on rent a property without entering into a written agreement, registered with the rent authority. Besides, all disputes will be heard at rent courts that states will have to set up. Civil courts will no longer hear such cases, as is the case now.

JUDICIARY

HINDU, JUN 19, 2015

50% HC judges related to senior judicial members: Report Soibam Rocky Singh

Around 50% of the judges of high courts and 33% judges in the Supreme Court are family members of those in “higher echelons of judiciary”, claims a research done by a Mumbai-based lawyer.

Advocate Mathews J Nedumpara, who is a petitioner-in-person, submitted the report to a five-judge constitutional bench hearing petitions challenging the NJAC Act. The situation was a result of the collegium system under which judges appointed other judges, Nedumpara told HT.

He said the Supreme Court’s verdicts in the 1990s resulted in the setting up of a collegium system that “monopolised” appointments to the higher judiciary, where kith and kin, and “former and sitting judges of the Supreme Court and high courts, Governors, chief ministers, law ministers, celebrated lawyers, the elite” are favoured.

According to the report, the Supreme Court has a sanctioned strength of 31 judges, out of which six judges were sons of former judges. The report mentioned appointments of over 88 judges from 13 high courts who were either born to a family of lawyers, judges, or worked under some legal luminaries.

Nedumpara claimed that the source of his information was the empirical data collected from the official websites of Supreme Court and 13 high courts in the months of September and October 2014. He said for other high courts, comparable data were not available.

He alleged that the collegium system functioned under complete secrecy where vacancies in the office of the higher judiciary were neither notified nor advertised.

Appearing for Supreme Court Bar Association, senior counsel Dushyant Dave had on Wednesday attacked the collegium system for ignoring merit and appointing judges who failed the common man and gave relief to only the “high and mighty”.

LABOUR

INDIAN EXPRESS, JUN 17, 2015

Centre increases number of work days under MGNREGA

The central government will increase the number of workdays under the rural job guarantee scheme from 100 to 150 in drought-affected areas, said sources.

The Rural Development Ministry has moved a cabinet note to increase the workdays under the scheme by 50 days in areas declared drought-affected by the state governments, said sources.

[Ruhi Tewari](#)

The NDA government is all set to increase the number of workdays under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) — a flagship scheme of the UPA government it had openly criticised earlier — in areas which may be affected by the truant monsoon this year, said sources.

The central government will increase the number of workdays under the rural job guarantee scheme from 100 to 150 in drought-affected areas, said sources.

MGNREGA promises 100 days of work every year to rural households across the country. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) as well as Union Transport Minister [Nitin Gadkari](#), while he was in charge of the rural development ministry, have earlier criticised the scheme. The NDA government had also been accused of attempting to “dilute” the scheme during its tenure.

The Rural Development Ministry, which oversees the implementation of the MGNREGA, has moved a cabinet note to increase the workdays under the scheme by 50 days in areas declared drought-affected by the state governments, said sources. The move has already been approved by the Finance Ministry and it is likely to be passed soon, they said.

The Centre has taken this decision as it expects an increased demand for wage-based employment on public works as regular agricultural activities would be affected in drought-hit areas.

The cost of providing work to rural households for 50 more days will be borne by the central government and the state will not have to bear the financial burden, said sources.

The 150 days will be applicable to the households who complete their 100 days and demand more employment. But this may turn out to be merely a “token move” as similar efforts in the past have not yielded desired results, with most households barely being provided the 100 promised days of work, said sources. In the last fiscal year, three per cent households across the nation completed the 100 of employment; a lower figure than the 10 per cent recorded in the fiscal year before that.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

STATESMAN, JUN 22, 2015

Nepal turns Left

It is a historical truism that ironies can shape a country's destiny even during a turbulent phase. Two months after tremblors shook the Himalayan country to its foundations, Nepal is set to bear witness to two watershed developments in July. The first is the Constitution which will rather belatedly chart out the praxis of governance. The second will be profoundly critical in the context of the country's political history and its monarchist background the next government will be led by the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), if last Thursday's announcement by the country's Deputy Prime Minister, Bamdev Gautam, is any indication.

The party is now the second largest entity in the coalition. Theoretically, therefore, Nepal will be scripting history with its first-ever Communist-led government. In terms of participation in governance, the "pinks" of the Marxist bloc would appear to have edged out the crimson variety. Despite their entry into the portals of power, Maoist insurgency has roiled Nepal for as long as it has. Of course, the Communist Party will succeed to a depleted inheritance crucially because the massive reconstruction in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake will devolve on the Left.

The fact of the matter must be that faced with the enormity of the tragedy, Nepal has opted for a change of guard. The experiment has seemingly been influenced by two factors the new Constitution which has taken a decade to be put in place, specifically since the monarchy was abolished in 2006. The other determinant has been the scale of relief and rehabilitation. With 8,000 killed and many more incapacitated and rendered homeless, the response of the present government has come under criticism generally. Not least because of its handling of the international relief effort and the somewhat puzzling bar on Indian assistance. Largely left to its own devices, the government's performance has been shoddy when it was expected to pull out all the stops.

Ergo, much will be expected of the successor dispensation, chiefly its projected Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli. Which explains its move to mobilise 5,000 party workers for a fresh relief and reconstruction endeavour. The change can be contextualised with the recent all-party decision to split the country into eight federal units, a deal that is expected to take care of ethnic sensitivities and sub-regional jingoism no less. Since the heady days of the monarchy, both issues have been as emotive as disruptive. While devolution of power will to an extent undermine the authority of Kathmandu, the

Communist Party will have a new slate to begin with. Nepal is in crisis, and the Communist-led coalition will hopefully be able to steer the Himalayan country as it enters a new phase in its constitutional history.

by Taboola

RAILWAYS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 17, 2015

Railways begin process of trimming staff

In a major policy initiative, the Indian Railways have started the process of staff rationalisation as part of plans to acquire a leaner look by cutting out on extra flab.

In order to implement the recommendations of the Bibek Debroy committee report on rail restructuring, the public transporter has decided to call on the expertise of the best-known consultancy firms.

“Four companies shortlisted include Ernst and Young, Price Waterhouse Coopers, KPMG and Deloitte,” said Pradeep Kumar, Railway Board member (staff).

Among the country’s biggest employers, the Indian Railways have 13.36 lakh personnel, including gazetted and non-gazetted officers, on rolls.

Highlighting the need for a sharp reduction in numbers of Group-A services by merging the existing nine services into either one unified service or two services, the committee has also hinted at reducing staff strength in Group B and C services. “We will also hire a reputed consultant to examine staff requirement of non-gazetted employees,” Kumar said, adding policymakers would study international benchmarks before a decision.

Railway unions, including the All India Railway Men Federation (AIRF) and the National Federation of Indian Railway Men (NFIR), have rejected the recommendations, threatening a tools-down strike in November.

Referring to the committee’s recommendations that the Railways must exit from peripheral activities such as providing medical services, Kumar said it was essential to keep employees in good health. “If the Railways doesn’t, some other agency will have to do it,” he said.

TELEGRAPH, JUN 23, 2015

Railway repair crew

What the Indian railways need is a change in price policy

Writing on the wall - Ashok V. Desai

The Congress lost its majority in Parliament long ago; it then had to reconcile itself to forming coalitions. That involved sharing ministries. The Congress liked to keep

important ministries like home and finance to itself; its allies, enjoying a few uncertain years in power, preferred lucrative ministries. The Raja affair resonates in public memory because he was the first minister to go to jail for corruption. But there were many earlier, luckier allies who made hay and bowed out safely.

Their favourite cash cow was the railways. If ministers were to make money, they had to have flunkies who were good at it. If flunkies were good at making ministers rich, they were also likely to look well after themselves. That is how the railways, once run with exemplary efficiency by British companies, became one of the government's sleaziest arms after nationalization.

That suits both politicians and bureaucrats; but Narendra Modi is intent on cleaning up the railways. His first railway minister was D.V. Sadananda Gowda. Gowda acted swiftly; he appointed a committee of estimable people under Bibek Debroy's chairmanship to look at the railways and suggest how to reform them. But in September 2014, Gowda's son, Karthik, made the wrong kind of news: just as he prepared to marry, an actress accused him of having married her before, and dragged him to court.

So in November, Modi brought back Suresh Prabhu from the wilderness to be railway minister. Prabhu met senior railwaymen, and found them upset with Debroy, who met them and forced economic logic upon them. They had their own recipe about what needed to be done with the railways. Prabhu was persuaded, and based his budget speech on their ideas; he also issued a white paper embodying their data and views, and promised a vision document later in the year.

Faced by this high-level sabotage, Debroy worked hard; he submitted an interim report in March, and the final report in June. The final report has not been published; but it is probably not very different from the interim report, whose principal recommendation is a changeover to commercial accounting. What does that

mean? There was a time when the British monarch levied whatever taxes he liked. But then, the subjects found that inconvenient, and insisted that his impositions must have their approval. That is how the practice of presenting an annual budget to Parliament arose. That was before the invention of double-entry book-keeping. The railways' budgetary practices are still stuck in that era; the Debroy committee wants to bring them into the 21st century.

What difference would it make? Just now, capital expenditure - on tracks, stations, power lines and so on - is shown in the budget, but their depreciation is provided for rather approximately. And potential costs and contingent liabilities are not provided for. What the committee is saying is that accounts should be streamlined to take care of these things.

I do not see what difference that would make: the accounts would show currently unaccounted costs, and reduce the railways' profits - perhaps turn them into losses. But

the railways have neither the freedom to raise their fares and freight nor an obligation not to make losses. What the railways need is a change in price policy; unless they can charge fares to cover costs and generate money for investment, change in accounting practice would make no difference.

The pricing decisions the railways would face are evident even without doing too many calculations. The railways charge generous profit margins on freight, and use the extra money to subsidize passenger fares. The low fares increase demand for passenger services, which the railways meet by running more trains. That too increases losses. Altogether, the railways make enormous losses, so they have no surplus to invest; nor can they borrow or attract new capital. There is a powerful vested interest behind the low fares in the form of the masses who jump on a train whenever they want to go home or anywhere else. Overcrowded trains also make it impossible to collect fares from ticketless travellers; that adds further to the losses. The railways try to reduce losses by charging absurdly high first-class fares. So most people who have money prefer to fly; those that travel first class in trains are politicians and senior government servants who travel free.

The Debroy committee's answer to rampant underpricing is a regulator, who would presumably force rational pricing on the railways. The railways would continue to be subservient to a minister; but the regulator would not be. He would report to Parliament, as the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and the Securities and Exchange Board of India do. They send off a copy of their annual report to every member of Parliament. The MPs mostly throw away the copies; they hardly ever ask a question. A railway regulatory authority will evoke as little interest. But if it tried to raise fares or cancel loss-making trains, the MPs will let it have it. So in my view, a regulator will make no difference; the railways will continue to be run uneconomically.

What would make a difference is if Parliament enacted that railways' losses would be reimbursed, *tout de suite*, by the finance ministry. If the finance minister suddenly found thousands of crores being frittered away by the railways without his permission, he will wake up. He will ask Parliament to raise some taxes so that he can finance the losses, or to empower him to fix railway fares and freights. Or he would ask for the railways to be corporatized. That would not be a solution, because the railways would then become just another sick enterprise; while sick enterprises are perfectly all right in industries where they are not essential, the railways can hardly be allowed to go sick and stop running services.

But maybe, when the Debroy committee advocates commercial accounting, it really means that the railways should cover full costs and make a profit - that they must become financially viable. That is a good idea, but a regulator cannot implement it. It can be done only by a minister; he must have a mandate from the prime minister, and must be given time enough to implement it. Suresh Prabhu is that minister; he is thinking of a long-term plan as his promise of a vision document suggests. He should go and ask the prime

minister for supreme power for five years. He should consult the comptroller and auditor general, and ask him to recast railway accounts into a simpler format appropriate for a modern commercial undertaking. Next, he should go around the country, meet senior railwaymen, get half a dozen of the best into the railway board, and ask them to produce two plans - one, for restructuring the railway manpower, and one for aligning fares and freight to costs. If he gets that far, he will be well on the way to repairing the railways.

DECCAN HERALD, JUN 17, 2015

Rlys recruits global firm to assess staff strength

Going by the Debroy Committee recommendations on rationalising manpower, Indian Railways would hire an international consultancy firm to assess its staff strength.

It invited bids from Ernst & Young, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Deloitte and KPMG. While one of the agencies would assess requirements in the gazetted category, a second agency would analyse the non- gazetted category.

Answering a query on the Debroy Committee recommendations, member (staff), Railway Board Pradip Kumar said the panel has suggested rationalisation and restructuring railway staff.

While the panel's report is still under scrutiny, Kumar said assessing the staff has already been taken up. The senior railway official, however, dismissed the committee's recommendation that railways should concentrate on its core function of running trains and abandon peripheral responsibilities of managing hospitals and schools.

"There has to be a system in place to keep the railways and its employees in good health," he said, rejecting the notion that maintaining overall health of its staff is contrary to the railway's core responsibility.

TAXATION

TIMES OF INDIA, JUN 23, 2015

Govt proposes income tax benefits for card payments

Finance minister Arun Jaitley, in his budget speech, had said that the government would introduce soon several measure that will incentivize credit or debit card transactions.

NEW DELHI: The government on Monday proposed income tax benefits for people making payments through credit or debit cards and doing away with transaction charges on purchase of petrol, gas and rail tickets with [plastic money](#).

In a draft paper for moving towards cashless economy and reduce tax avoidance, the government also proposed to make it mandatory to settle high value transactions of more than Rs 1 lakh through electronic mode.

In order to incentivize shopkeepers, the government has proposed tax rebate to them provided they accept a significant value of sales through debit or credit cards.

The proposals are aimed at building a transactions history of an individual to enable improved credit access and financial inclusion, reduce tax avoidance and check counterfeiting of currency.

"Tax benefits in terms of income tax rebates to be considered to consumers for paying a certain proportion of their expenditure through electronic means," said that draft proposals for facilitating electronic transactions on which the government has invited comments till June 29.

It further said that all "high value transactions of, say, more than Rs 1 lakh, (be settled) only by electronic means".

The paper said the tax benefits could be provided to merchants for accepting [electronic payments](#).

"An appropriate tax rebate can be extended to a merchant if at least say 50 per cent value of the transactions is through electronic means. Alternatively, 1-2 per cent reduction in value added tax could be considered on all electronic transactions by the merchants," it added.

Finance minister [Arun Jaitley](#), in his budget speech, had said that the government would

"introduce soon several measure that will incentivize credit or debit card transactions and disincentivize cash transaction".

BUSINESS STANDARD, JUN 16, 2015

PAN-based database of taxpayers in the works

Database to contain taxable financial transactions and history of any tax-paying individual

The government is working on a permanent account number (PAN)-based [online repository](#) to enable assessing officers to access all tax-related information and taxable financial transactions of taxpayers, Anita Kapur, chairperson of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), said on Tuesday.

"It is called the Income Tax Business Application and once ready, it will vastly improve the data mining and business intelligence of the department and the taxman. It will be a robust database, which will include all sorts of financial transaction data collected on a person or entity," Kapur said at a media interaction.

"When the assessing officer opens an assessee's PAN, he/she will get the entire information. We do 360-degree profiling but that is done by the investigation division of large tax evaders. It will be rolled out in phases and we hope to launch it fully next calendar year," she said.

STRENGTHENING I-T

Database to contain taxable financial transactions and history of any tax-paying individual

It will increase scrutiny on tax evaders

CBDT chief says taxmen will stop pursuing [MAT](#) cases if the Shah panel or the apex court rules against these

Says I-T dept will continue pursuing its Rs 20,495-crore tax claim on Cairn India

Adds tax evasion is 'spoiling' the culture of compliance in the country

Says fresh talks with Mauritius on double taxation avoidance agreement soon

Though the government also wanted to use [Aadhaar](#) data for profiling, Kapur said as Aadhaar was voluntary, information on all [taxpayers](#) wouldn't be captured in the database.

She said the government was taking these measures to simplify the tax structure. As part of this, the department will try to dispose of all pending cases by June 30 and all cases in six months.

"It is a radical initiative. And, from her statements and those of Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#) in various fora, it is clear the government is serious about going after tax evaders. This is a step in that direction," said Rakesh Nangia, managing partner, Nangia & Co. "From the government's side, the level of monitoring on taxpayers and evaders will increase manifold. All indications are that the Centre and the tax department are moving fast on this."

Kapur said the tax department was widening its net and aiming to bring in as many as 2.5 million new assesses under the tax-paying bracket every month.

"I am just trying to say there has to be deterrence against tax evasion. If my officer is not harsh on a tax evader, I think you would agree that he/she is not doing the job properly. There is a law in place and there is no place for compassion in law. Law has to be enforced fairly and evenly," she said.

On levying minimum alternate tax (MAT) on foreign institutional investors (FIIs), Kapur said the A P Shah committee was set up as part of the government's efforts to resolve that issue. Else, the tax department would have to be answerable to agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Central Vigilance Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

She denied any "political pressure" in setting up of the panel, which she said would look at the merits of levying MAT. The taxmen, she said, wouldn't resort to coercive methods to recover MAT dues and would wait for either a Supreme Court judgment or the recommendations of the Shah panel on the issue. If the ruling was against the levy of MAT, the department would stop pursuing the cases, she said. "I cannot anticipate what the A P Shah panel will do. The Shell and Vodafone cases went against us and once we accepted that judgment, we told our officers 'please don't do future assessments and please don't further agitate these in appeals'."

Asked what the government would do if the Shah panel and the Supreme Court gave

conflicting views, she said, "We will cross the bridge when we come to it...The commission has fixed a schedule for hearing all stakeholders...let's see how things proceed." Among the terms of reference for the committee, the three-member panel is mandated to examine the levy of MAT on FIIs for the period before April 1 this year. While the Union Budget had scrapped MAT on foreign investors, the tax demand for the period before that was to stay. The committee was set up after the government claimed to have raised tax demand of Rs 603 crore, which spooked investors.

Kapur said the [CBDT](#) would defend its Rs 20,495-crore tax claim on Cairn India even after the company was merged with its parent, Vedanta Ltd. Cairn India has challenged a March income tax notice seeking Rs 20,495 crore for failure to pay withholding tax on alleged capital gains by its erstwhile promoter, Cairn Energy Plc. "This has gone to court. We have a provisional attachment order. We will ensure that we remain secure. Whatever position changes, we will ensure our security. We are certainly keeping watch on it," she said.

Separately, the department had issued a Rs 10,247-crore tax demand on Cairn Energy Plc for Rs 24,500 crore of alleged capital gains in 2006 while transferring all its Indian assets to a new company, Cairn India, and getting it listed on stock exchanges. After the notice, it restrained Cairn Energy from selling its residual 9.8 per cent stake in Cairn India.

"The high-level committee to scrutinise all income tax cases arising out of the retrospective tax has received less than 10 applications so far," Kapur told reporters.

She said tax evasion was "spoiling" the culture of compliance in the country. "We try to ensure our tax regime remains non-intrusive....but there are certain people or cases against whom intrusive action is required because not everybody is willingly compliant. We have the powers of search and seizure under the Income Tax Act."

She added it was possible that due to a lax system of enforcement, even compliant taxpayers would "waver" from their duty. "Demonstrative action" was required against evaders, she said. Soon, the Centre would initiate fresh rounds of negotiations with Mauritius on the double taxation avoidance agreement, she said, adding the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act agreement with the US would be effective from September.

STRENGTHENING I-T

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WATER SUPPLY

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JUN 16, 2015

Delhi residents to generate own water bills using mobile app soon

Delhiites will soon be able to generate their own water bills using a mobile application which is likely to be launched by the end of this month.

The AAP government's go-ahead to the system, developed by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), comes amid mounting complaints of inflated bills. According to senior officials of the DJB, consumers had complained of bills being generated on the basis of incorrect meter readings. Several houses remain locked during inspections and the officials have to then rely on the household's average consumption to generate the bill, leading to discrepancy.

According to a senior DJB official, the new application would allow consumers to input their latest meter reading along with a photograph of the meter following which the water bill would be generated. But consumers would first have to register themselves on www.djb.gov.in.

"They (consumers) will have to download an application on their mobile phone. The latest meter reading will have to be fed into the app. After that a picture of the meter will also have to be uploaded by them. As soon as the picture is uploaded, a bill will get generated automatically. Anyone can then make the payment online," the official said.

Random checks would be conducted and action taken against anyone found misusing the application by feeding in wrong readings or uploading fake pictures of the meter.

"This system will bring immense convenience to consumers as they will be able to generate their bill to their satisfaction in a hassle-free manner. It will also reduce burden on our staff," said DJB CEO SS Yadav.

Sources said the application is at the testing stage and is likely to be launched by the end of this month.

The DJB caters to around 21 lakh water connections in the city, of which over 7 lakh benefit from the AAP government's free water scheme to those whose consumption is limited to 20,000 litres a month.

WOMEN

HINDU, JUN 22, 2015

Attitudes on Indian women must change

VISHAKHA N. DESAI

In the international context, it is not useful to make excuses or rationalise the problems Indian women face

Recently, I was at a meeting with senior Indian diplomats. After a healthy discussion on India's recent foreign policy accomplishments — defence agreements with the U.S., trade deals with China and Japan, and a general feeling of confidence surrounding the proactive international agenda of the Narendra Modi government, one of the members of the group raised the question of the appalling treatment of women in India. "This is one of the hardest questions I encounter as a diplomat," the senior-most diplomat said. He went on to elaborate that this is not a country-specific problem. After all, he said, in total numbers the U.S. has more cases of rape and sexual assault than India does, including aggressive sexual assaults in university campuses. So, he concluded, the media, especially the international media, should stop singling out India on this issue.

I found myself both distressed and slightly sympathetic on hearing his answer. On the one hand, as a historian and daughter of a Gandhian woman who fought for India's independence and helped establish one of the first women's organisations in the country, I know that explaining the role of women in India is complicated. Whenever I am asked this question in the U.S., I often say that it depends on the context.

It is very confusing for outsiders to make sense of the multivalent nature of Indian women's position in society. They wonder: how is it that India can produce women political leaders, from a Prime Minister to Chief Ministers, but also rank amongst the countries with the highest levels of infanticide, with millions of "missing girls" as the Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen, has pointed out? How is it that India can boast of female executives in national financial institutions, but its women rank 140 out of 179 countries in the Mother's Index Rank (compared to China, which ranks 61)?

Clearly, these apparent contradictions don't fit neatly into easy generalisations. My 98-year-old mother was as upset as I was to hear about the horrible Nirbhaya case in Delhi. But when I went to see the recent theatrical production of the same name in New York, it left me distressed — it was mainly about anger and victimisation of young Indian women. Seeing the play in New York, where a majority of the audience had no knowledge of India or its complex cultural attitudes towards women, made me acutely aware of the dangers of projecting a one-dimensional view of any culture. I almost wanted to stand up and say, "Please, there is another side to this story: I am a second-generation feminist, and my mother was fighting for women's dignity in 1935!"

Nonetheless, I had to acknowledge that for the large majority of Indian women, life is not only tough, but precarious. As a recent *Economist* article points out, resources spent on women in India are more uneven than in most countries. Women in India are far likelier

to die giving birth, because of a lack of even basic medical assistance, than in China. The increased numbers of sexual assaults and rapes (at least in terms of reporting) in recent decades suggest that growing prosperity, if anything, has led to a greater clash of traditional attitudes with contemporary ambitions.

This brings us back to the discussion with Indian diplomats. In the international context, it is not useful to make excuses or rationalise the problems a large number of Indian women face. It would be far more effective if we first acknowledged that there is a serious problem in India. It is as much about attitudes as it is about policies.

Women's groups in India were right to criticise Prime Minister Modi when he gave a backhanded compliment to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for being tough on terrorism "despite being a woman". Such retrograde views, whether conscious or unconscious, are all too prevalent among Indian leaders. They have to be pointed out, and the leaders must be made accountable. Equally important, policies have to change, whether around increasing resources for strengthening the maternal health of women, or for educating girls and keeping them in schools.

Indian diplomats would do well if they first addressed the problem facing Indian women, pointed out what the government is doing or is willing to do to address the issue, and finally educated their international audiences about the complex nature of women's roles in India. Only then can they place the issue in a global context and share their concerns for women everywhere, making sure that they denounce degrading of women no matter where they occur. It will not help to blame the media or external forces as being out to sully India's reputation. India is strong enough today to acknowledge its problems and move forward by finding solutions. It will require consistent efforts to change age-old attitudes that kept women subservient.

(Vishakha N. Desai is Special Advisor for Global Affairs to the President and Professor of Practice, Columbia University, President Emerita, Asia Society.)

In the international context, it is not useful to rationalise the problems faced by Indian women. It would be more effective if we first acknowledged that there is a problem

YOGA

BUSINESS LINE, JUN 22, 2015

Over 35,000 join Modi to create yoga record

International Day of Yoga event at Rajpath makes it to the Guinness Book

In the Modi Government, ‘informal instruction’ typically means ‘get it done’. And celebrating the inaugural International Yoga Day was one such proposal for everyone — not just in the public sector, but also private.

Almost all wings of the government joined Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a yoga session here on Sunday morning, and similar such events took place across the country — from the icy heights of Siachen Glacier to the humid beaches of Kanyakumari — led by senior ministers.

From students and defence officials to senior bureaucrats and the President, every one twisted and turned, except the Opposition, which alleged that the Modi government had used the Day for political mileage without doing anything substantial to promote yoga.

The largest of spectacles unfolded early morning on the imposing Rajpath, where Modi, whose call led to declaration of June 21 as International Day of Yoga by the UN, sprang a surprise as he performed various *asanas* and *pranayams* with over 35,000 people. The Rajpath event made it to the Guinness Book of World Records for the largest yoga demonstration at a single venue with 35,985 people participating. It also set a new record for the largest number of people of various nationalities — 84 — performing yoga at one place.

An avid yoga practitioner, 64-year-old Modi, who was not scheduled to perform the *asanas*, climbed down from the podium after his address to the gathering and joined others along the boulevard. US Ambassador to India Richard Verma was among scores of diplomats who attended the mega event.

Don’t commoditise yoga

Later, addressing a two-day international conference on yoga for holistic health, Modi said, “If we make yoga a commodity, then maximum damage to it will be done by us. Yoga is not a commodity, yoga is not a brand which has to be sold.”

Under attack from Congress for “usurping” the traditional discipline, Modi said yoga is “not the brainchild of a government” or the UN but a gift from many generations and many traditions from across the world. He cautioned against oneupmanship on the ancient practice, saying it belongs to all countries and all communities.

The International Yoga Day was observed the world over — from Australia to the UK and China to Afghanistan.

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Propagating yoga is not a state function

Subrata Mukherjee

A number of questions have been raised about the Modi Government's attempt to popularize yoga at state expense and involving even the government servants and army personnel in its propagation in order to ensure mass participation on the International Yoga Day on Sunday. In order to underline its universal acceptance and relevance the acceptance by a large number of Muslim countries is also being publicised with the purpose of proving that the internal Muslim opposition is parochial and motivated.

But in this debate and with the government's determination to make it a grand success what is forgotten is that the propagation of yoga cannot be a state function and as such should be left to, as has been the practice till now, to the social and private sphere. One should not overlook the fact that yoga has a clear religious connotation. Sydney Eisen and Maurice Filler point out that “in the Hindu religion yoga is the training and practice which enable an individual to achieve unity with God”. They also add that as human beings have differing temperaments, yoga has to be practiced in different ways. The first principle of success of a yogi is to insulate oneself from any outside influence and reach the stage of pure contemplation.

It is in the Bhagvad Gita, a sacred text of the Hindus that Lord Krishna enunciates the meaning of yoga while addressing Arjuna, who was refusing to continue the battle because of the revulsion of the bloodshed of kith and kin to perform his duty in the Kantian sense. The aim of yoga is to build an equilibrium both in success and failure and this 'evenness' of mind is called yoga. It is a situation beyond desire, a state of divinity and a situation of peace one beyond anger, a liberated human being who has experienced both sacrifices and austerities and is friendly to all. Such a state is reached when one conquers oneself; one who is steadfast in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain and in honour and dishonour. It is a state of total detachment.

Lord Krishna is very categorical that such a state of mind can be reached only in solitude, in surroundings that are clean and by getting rid of all desires and possessions. The practice of yoga is strictly for self purification. Lord Krishna surmises “serene and fearless, steadfast in the vow of celibacy and subdued in mind, he should sit in yoga,

thinking of me and intent on Me alone”. This attainment of bliss synchronizes with the Lord himself. It is the concentration of the spirit, like “a lamp in a place sheltered from the mind does not flicker”- that is the figure employed by a yogi who with a subdued mind practices concentration of the spirit. This tranquil mind concentrates only on the Spirit and nothing else. The attainment of “supreme happiness comes to the Yogi whose mind is at rest, whose passions are composed and who is pure, and has become one with God”. The text and message of the yoga and yogi are clear. It is an individualized act and not a drill or a public act of mass exercise to keep one fit. It is far more serious as it carries a message of unison with God.

Yoga has a spiritual connotation and does not come under the purview of the modern state based on the notion that there are things that are Ceasar's and things that are not Ceasar's.

The state must not have anything to do with either propagating or opposing yoga and such a decision is part of an individual's choice and nothing more. Hurriedly importing carpets from China for the massive show at Rajpath proves further that it is more a show than any intent to improve the health of the people or inculcate a sense of discipline.

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