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CIVIL SERVICE

HINDU, MAR 21, 2014

Court throws out IAS officer's plea

A division bench of the A.P. High Court comprising Justice K.C. Bhanu and Justice Anis dismissed a case filed by IAS officer Sabyasachi Ghosh, secretary to Industries and Commerce Department, who challenged his transfer from one subject to another in the same department.

HINDU, MAR 19, 2014

Holiday for Central govt. establishments on April 14

The Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India, has declared April 14, the birthday of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a closed holiday for all Central government offices.

HINDU, MAR 19, 2014

Physically challenged IAS officers can choose cadre closer to home State

AARTI DHAR

But no transfer to home State under amended rule

Indian Administrative Service officers, appointed under the physically challenged category, can now choose a cadre closer to their home States. However, no transfer to the home State will be permitted under an amended rule.

In a notification issued on Tuesday, amending guidelines for posting of IAS officers with physical disabilities, the Department of Personnel and Training said a request for change of cadre could be made by an officer within three months through the parent cadre. Along with the application, documents in support of the grounds for cadre change would have to be enclosed.

The applicant will have to indicate a minimum of three States which are geographically contiguous to his/her home State. In their absence, the State closest to the home State in terms of distance would be admissible.

The government may, case-by-case and taking into account the extreme hardship faced by the officer, on the basis of a medical board report, permit transfer to a cadre closer to the home State.

If the transfer is agreed to 'in principle' by the Centre, the State government's concurrence will be sought as per the preference cited by the officer. If it is not forthcoming from any of the preferred States, the Centre may, after consulting another neighbouring State willing to accept the officer, effect the transfer.

The Centre's decision on the selection of the State or cadre will be final and binding on the officer. These guidelines will be implemented with prospective effect.

INDIAN EXPRESS, MAR 21, 2014

Babu who would be neta

Yogendra Narain

A cooling-off period is unnecessary, but mostly the transition from civil servant to politician has not come easy.

Of late, we have seen many retired civil servants join political parties as a first step towards participating in active politics. While the newly formed Aam Aadmi Party has attracted a fair few, there has also been an exodus of retired civil servants to major parties like the Congress, BJP, JD(U), Trinamool Congress, etc. By itself, it is a positive development, as infusion of administrative expertise in political parties can theoretically lead to more balanced policies and better governance.

What are the main reasons for this? One is that, with better healthcare, retiring government servants do not consider themselves to be old or tired. Used to working between 10 to 12 hours a day, they want to be actively engaged. Given that their pension leaves them financially stable, they look to some vocation, such as joining politics. A second category of civil servants are actually interested in politics, and join a party as soon as they have an offer. A third category of civil servants want to join a political party hoping to get important government posts. There is also a fourth category — those who do not formally join a political party but become active players in its thinktanks. This is how they become close to the powers that be.

A retired civil servant is unlikely to be welcomed by middle- and lower-level party functionaries. The latter feel that while they have spent years serving the party, retired civil servants are inducted laterally at senior positions. Therefore, ex-bureaucrats face hostility from political workers and their position in the party hierarchy is not secure.

Once, the late P.C. Alexander, who was tipped to become the president of India, told me that party leaders dropped him at the last moment as they felt that they would not like to pay obeisance to a person who had served as secretary to the prime minister. Natwar Singh was also sidelined, though he had done well as minister of external affairs. Yashwant Sinha performed well as finance minister, but was never given the position he deserved within his party. Ex-civil servants are generally treated as outsiders by politicians, but some former civil servants, like P.L. Punia, have done extremely well. They hold positions of high authority because of their ability to speak on political matters with deep understanding.

By and large, a civil servant does not possess the attributes of a popular and effective politician. The ability to address large audiences or mix with the common man does not come easily. It is also difficult to understand political nuances. At the level of secretaries, they are not used to travelling extensively in variable weather conditions. They do not find it easy to go from house to house, canvassing and asking for votes. They have long forgotten their days as sub-divisional officers when they went to the villages. It is also not easy for them to decide what to say when confronted with caste and community problems in the field. It needs a hard-skinned ex-bureaucrat to find his moorings in politics, as he is of no utility unless he belongs to a caste or community that can fetch votes.

Some former civil servants try to achieve prominence by revealing secret and confidential facts, which they got to know while in active service. Only those secrets that hurt the rival parties are revealed, while information about the leaders of the political party they have joined will not be disclosed. This is most reprehensible and must be discouraged by all political parties. It not only demeans the civil servant but also the party he has joined.

There have been debates on whether there should be a cooling-off period for civil servants before they join a political party after retirement. Such restrictions would be infructuous, as ex-civil servants would not formally join the party and could yet actively work for the same. Moreover, once a civil servant retires, he has every right to express his political views and join any political party he wants.

The neutrality of a civil servant during his active service does come into question when he joins a political party after retirement. But that is not much different from the present situation, when this accusation is made even before retirement, especially when a ruling party changes after elections. The first action of the ruling party is to change the senior officers from cabinet secretary down to all others occupying important positions.

They are believed to be in league with the political dispensation that has been ousted. Even civil servants of proven merit are set aside. So, the question of a cooling-off period before the retired civil servant joins a political party becomes irrelevant. Whatever political bias a civil servant has already exists through active service. However, during his service, no civil servant will grant undue favours to a political party because of the civil service conduct rules, vigilance organisations and an active media.

The writer, a 1965 batch UP cadre IAS officer, is a former Union defence secretary.

EDUCATION

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 21, 2014

DU teachers demand a say in PG reforms

[*Manash Pratim Gohain*](#)

NEW DELHI: Though some have called it a "wonderful idea", others are skeptical of the purported benefits of the forthcoming postgraduate-level reforms in Delhi University. Teachers have pointed out "several issues that must be resolved through wider consultations".

Some also felt the teachers should have been taken into confidence and the news should have come to them from the university instead of the media. Former head of department of political science P K Dutta said, "It's too early to comment but I am not aware of any consultations."

Dutta said the strength of the two-year course is its focus on sub-discipline specialization. "The critical question is, how much of the syllabus should be discipline-based and how much of it should be interdisciplinary? Interdisciplinary studies make sense only if it can draw on the strength of the discipline."

Others feel that, while trans-disciplinary and meta-department concepts are wonderful ideas, the real test lies in implementation and, prior to that, creating the right atmosphere for such mature reforms. Head of the systematics lab in department of environmental studies S D Biju said, "A one-year PG is not a new idea. Many people in the world do it. But their system is mature. In UK, they don't need a masters for PhD at many places. It's likewise in Ireland."

However, executive council member and physics teacher with Miranda House Abha D Habib is critical of the continuous reforms sans review. "Before implementing FYUP, no study was conducted on its desirability and availability of infrastructure. No extra grants have been promised by the government," Habib said.

Chairman of AAD (Rathi) J Khuntia said, "Ideas are always welcome. The present dispensation has enough time left to consult teachers and students and accept their views. Hope this will be done."

DUTA president Nandita Narain, however, slammed the initiative, saying, "The extra year that the university has added to the UG course has no PG content—only foundation courses. This is criminal dilution of the UG and PG degrees"

HINDU, MAR 20, 2014

DU teachers get an ally in JNU

Some DU decisions undemocratic, says JNUTA resolution

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association has come out in support of its counterpart in Delhi University. It has passed resolutions against Delhi University's

recent decisions taken at its Executive Council meeting consequent to which far-reaching changes in the academic life of teachers is imminent.

“At the JNUTA GBM held this past week, we decided to send a resolution to the Delhi University Teachers’ Association in support of its struggle against the undemocratic steps being initiated by DU at its EC meeting held earlier this month,” said JNUTA president Arun Kumar.

He said another resolution urged all sections in the academic community in the country to stand up in support of the DUTA struggle “lest such changes should get initiated in other institutions of higher learning in India”.

The JNUTA believes that the decision that allows the present Vice-Chancellor to qualify for a second term was “undemocratic”. As for the move to impose the UGC’s code of professional ethics on teachers, the JNUTA believes it “militates against the spirit of democracy and liberalism which are essential for the smooth functioning of a university” while enabling the university administration to unilaterally target dissenting academics.

Another proposal that has been approved is to vest all authority for initiating action against teachers found guilty of “misconduct” with the university administration. This, the JNUTA said, will only “reinforce authoritarian trends in Delhi University and lead to curtailment of autonomy by instilling a sense of fear in the academic community of the university.”

Finally, the JNUTA said that it has heard about threats that were held out to teachers who wanted to record their dissent with these proposals in the EC. “We believe that dissent is the essence of higher learning. We deplore this attempt to curtail the democratic functioning of a body like the EC,” added Mr. Kumar.

ELECTIONS

HINDU, MAR 21, 2014

The caste bogey in election analysis

DIPANKAR GUPTA

The great untruth that weighs on our minds, especially during the election season, is the correlation we make between caste and voting behaviour. This is lazy thinking; just because caste influences decisions on marriage and other assorted rituals, this does not mean that it has a free run everywhere.

To cure ourselves of this unexamined prejudice, all we need to do is climb a short learning curve.

Demography and distribution

Let us begin with demographic facts. Except for Maharashtra where Marathas, of one kind or another, constitute about 33 per cent of the population, everywhere else, no caste, in a numeric sense, dominates any constituency. West Uttar Pradesh is supposed to be a Jat stronghold, but the Jats constitute between 8-10 per cent of the population. Likewise, in the rest of U.P., the Yadavs rarely ever constitute more than 12-15 per cent in most parliamentary constituencies. In Bihar's Madhopura region which is reputed to be an impregnable Yadav stronghold, only 23-25 per cent of the people there belong to this caste.

If then in most constituencies there are five to six castes of roughly equal size, but nearly always two major contenders, imagine the strain this poses to simplistic arithmetic. With numbers such as these, most people are compelled to vote outside their caste even if that hurts. As nobody wants to waste their vote, circumstances force many to give their caste sentiments a rest when they enter the polling booth. After all, there are only two viable candidates in the fray, but the voters come from five or six different caste groups. This is why most of them return home after opting for someone they would not have tea with. Unsurprisingly, when psephologists and politicians use caste numbers to predict election results, they are almost always wrong.

That they go wrong even in the supposedly caste-ridden States of U.P. and Bihar does not appear to dent their confidence. Even in places like Madhopura, Arrah, Barka, Khagariya, where the Yadavs have a sort of significant presence, it is not as if Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav's people won every time. Or take U.P. too; during the period 1991-1998, there was no consistency in electoral outcomes in areas of high Yadav population, such as Azamgarh, Jaunpur and Ghazipur. In Maharashtra too one finds a similar trend. In constituencies where there is a high Maratha presence, such as in Bombay South, Bombay South Central, Ahmednagar and Kopergaon, the honours were distributed between different parties in the elections held between 1991-1998.

Urban bias and homogenising

So, if voters consider issues other than caste it is not out of the largeness of their hearts, but because of the force of numbers. Politicians, true to form, function differently, raised as they have been on patron-client networks. This is why when it comes to giving the ticket, appointing election agents and recruiting goon squads, they look for hangers-on from their own caste and kin groups first. Sadly, most journalists reflect these caste calculations because of their proximity to political bigwigs. As their election jaunts with politicians in jeeps and planes are treated like scoops, they miss facts that are at a slight distance, and don't even know it.

There is yet another reason why election specialists go wrong, and we may call this an outcome of an urban bias. From a distance it appears as if all those who belong to the category called "Scheduled Castes" (SC) or "Other Backward Classes" (OBC) look alike, think alike and are organically linked. This is another myth.

When the Marathwada riots exploded in Maharashtra in 1979, the Mahars, but not the other SCs, were the object of Maratha wrath. This prompted many Mang and Matang families to etch their caste names prominently on their huts to escape Maratha rage. Few would argue that Ms Mayawati is a champion of the Jatavs in U.P., but that does not say it all. The Jatav caste does dominate SC numbers in U.P., but there are large districts like Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Gonda, Rae Bareilly, Pratapgarh and Sonbhadra where SCs, other than Jatavs, have a larger presence. So, it is not as if all Scheduled Castes are in the same boat.

How else can one explain why the BSP lost every seat in 2002 in all the Sonbhadra constituencies of east U.P.? This is one of the districts where the SCs are dominant, but where the Jatavs have a lesser presence. Come 2007 and the situation undergoes a dramatic reversal; Ms Mayawati conquers the region. In 2012, another shift; this time Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) loses half the territories it had won just five years ago. Even when we are talking about the SCs in U.P., and with Ms Mayawati on our minds, there is no clear caste correlation.

We make a similar error when it comes to the OBCs. From a distance, it seems, once again, that all these agrarian communities are one undifferentiated mass with earth in their toe nails, but that is where the resemblance stops. The Jats and Gujjars, for example, have a poor opinion about each other. In fact, there are popular tales and fables, that are related at the drop of a hat where one community calumnies the other.

For example, the Jats believe that because Gujjars sell milk, they could sell their family too. The Gujjars return the compliment by saying that the Jats had purportedly sold their souls to the British and that they could do so again to the highest bidder. Yet, we have often heard it being said that there is a caste logic that binds those listed in the OBC category. A quick visit to India's villages will knock this fantasy out cold.

This should prepare us to look for reasons other than caste loyalties, or traditions, when we examine the rise of OBC mobilisation. Agrarian castes united, post-Mandal, not because they had traditional ties of solidarity, but because they felt deprived in a rapidly

urbanising society. They saw opportunity in OBC reservations. There are always straightforward economic reasons behind many a caste manoeuvre. The same logic applied during the All India Kurmi Sabha of the 1930s. It had within its fold the Koeris, Ayudhyas and Dhanuks whose caste rules did not permit them to even eat together. In later decades, the KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim) and AJGAR (Ahir, Jat, Gujjar and Rajput) combines made political bedfellows of disparate, often hostile, castes. They succeeded in this because livelihood interests make for good pillow talk.

Caste and patronage

Neither the Jats nor the Yadavs were a majority community anywhere. But it was their secular accomplishments that magnified their presence. In west U.P., for example, the Jats were the best placed in terms of official connections and literacy. It is because they controlled this “social capital” that the Gujjars and Sainis in the neighbourhood came to them for favours. If they wanted a job, file a complaint with the electricity board, or hide from the police, only a Jat worthy could help them out. The Yadavs played a similar patronising role elsewhere in east U.P. and in large parts of Bihar. From the outside, it was easy to come away with the view that areas like Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Bijnor belonged to the Jats just as Madhopura and Khagariya were Yadav pockets.

The situation is changing. Over the past 30 years or so, other OBCs have managed to send forth their own band of notables from within their respective castes. This has diminished the aura that the Jats and Yadavs once had. The same process holds true for the SCs as well. At one time, the Mahars were the best connected among the SCs in Maharashtra just as the Jatavs were in U.P. With time, however, other SCs have also gained their own clutch of virtuosos: literati, schoolteachers, police inspectors, businessmen, and so on. Consequently, their dependence on the Mahars or Jatavs has, more or less, snapped.

Unlike the 1990s, caste and patronage no longer go together, not even within the OBCs and SCs. This is because there are now patrons, or near patrons, that come from many castes, whether from the SC or OBC category. There is then greater elite rivalry among castes making it difficult to play the caste card down the middle. Also, now that reservation has covered nearly all but the Brahmans, Baniyas and Rajputs, there is little that can be gained by agitating and mobilising along caste lines.

Politicians have caught on to this which is why many of them, turncoat style, are now talking about development instead.

(Dipankar Gupta is distinguished professor and director, Centre for Public Affairs and Critical Theory, Shiv Nadar University.)

With five to six castes of roughly equal size in every constituency, but nearly always two major contenders, most people are compelled to vote outside their caste even if that really hurts

DECCAN HERALD, MAR 19, 2014

Timely directive

The Supreme Court's directive to the Law Commission to form some clear guidelines on hate speech is timely because a large number of complaints and cases relating to it occur during election campaigns.

The court has also asked the Commission for its views on whether candidates can be disqualified and political parties derecognised for making hate speeches. The Commission's recommendations may not be available for use during this campaign period, and in any case, the court has felt any tightening of the legal provisions and enabling the Election Commission to take action in cases of hate speech lie in the realm of parliament's powers.

However, it has observed that there is no legal vacuum as such, because existing statutory provisions, particularly the penal law, provide sufficient remedy to curb the menace. It thinks that the problem is more of lack of implementation of laws than of their absence, and asked the law enforcement agencies to take strong action against those who create enmity and disaffection based on religion, caste, ethnicity, region or other divisive factors.

The court's direction and observations show that there are problems of both definition and execution of laws. It is well known that offensive speeches inviting action under relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code or the Representation of People Act are not often pursued. Bal Thackeray had always got away with hate speech. The Shiv Sena and some other parties have revelled in it.

Even when cases were pursued, the results have not been the best and consistent. BJP leader Varun Gandhi was unconvincingly let off by the trial court for a speech he made during the 2009 Lok Sabha election campaign. There are many other cases of failures of follow-up legal action and prosecution.

While better execution of laws is needed, a sharper definition is also important. This is because what is considered as hate speech on one forum or in one context may not be seen so on other forums and in other contexts. Action against hate speech should not also curb free speech, which is a fundamental right. The court, in fact, refused to give a general instruction to the Election Commission on dealing with speeches during the campaign on this ground.

Some countries have specific laws on hate speech while others do not. The Law Commission's views might throw clearer light on the matter. But its reports are usually ignored by the government and parliament.

TRIBUNE, MAR 20, 2014

EC issues guidelines on using social media

With the emergence of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter as an important tool for campaigning in polls, the Election Commission (EC) has come out with guidelines on political advertisements using such websites.

The guidelines also suggest political parties to obtain certification for contents before putting them in public domain.

The EC has also asked the social networking sites to maintain expenditure incurred by the parties and individual candidates on advertisements so that they can be produced to the commission whenever asked for.

Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vijay Dev said that the commission had received two complaints regarding the use of social media in the assembly polls in December.

In separate letters to major social networking sites, the EC directed them to ensure that contents displayed by them during the electoral process should not be "unlawful or malicious or violative of the Model Code of Conduct".

It said the guidelines to the social media have been issued as part of the commission's efforts to address the problem of paid news.

All the major political parties have been using the social networking sites as part of their campaign strategy, particularly to woo the young voters. In the recent Delhi Assembly polls, the Aam Aadmi Party had used Facebook and Twitter in a big way to draw support for itself.

Director in Election Commission Dhirender Ojha said the directive of the commission will be applicable to a range of Internet-based social media which include Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Wikipedia.

"We have told the social networking sites to take pre-certification from the Media Certification and Monitoring Committees at district and state levels," he said while addressing a workshop on media's role in the electoral process.

He said the commission has already issued directions for providing details of social media accounts by the candidates while filing their nominations.

Dev said the EC would try its best to prevent candidates and political parties from "misusing" the social media but at the same time maintained that it was not attempting to "throttle" the social media.

He said that the provisions of Model Code of Conduct and related instructions of the commission will be applicable for contents being posted on the Internet, including social media websites, by candidates and political parties.

Though he admitted that monitoring contents in the social media was an uphill task, but asserted that every effort will be made to maintain decorum in the campaign and ensure a level playing field for all the candidates.

PIONEER, MAR 20, 2014

29 EXPENSE OBSERVERS APPOINTED FOR LS SEATS

Election Commission has appointed expenses observers for the Lok Sabha elections in 29 constituencies and Vidisha Vidhan Sabha constituency's by-election.

Side by side the Lok Sabha elections, polling for Vidisha Vidhan Sabha constituency's by-election will also be held Expenses observers will keep special watch over election expenses of every candidate. Limit of each Lok Sabha candidate has been fixed at Anil Mishra (mob no. 08101011100) has been appointed expenses observer for Vidhan Sabha constituencies 61-Chitrakoot,63-Satna, 65-Maihar, 66-Amarpatan, 64-Nagod, 62-Raigaon and 67-Rampur Baghelan, Amit Kumar (0925522123) 67-Sirmaur, 70-Teonthar, 71-Mauganj, 73-Majhgawan, 74-Rewa, 69-Simariya, 72-Dev Talab and 75-Gurh, Ayaz Ahmad Kohli (09810286644) 76-Churhat, 77-Sidhi, 79-Chitrangi, 82-Dhauhani, 80-Singrauli, 78-Sinhawal, 81-Devsar and 83-Beohari, B.S. Meena (09051158999) 84-Jai Singh Nagar, 86-Kotma, 88-Pushprajgarh, 89-Bandhavgarh, 87-Anuppur, 84-Jaitpur, 90-Manpur and 91-Barwara, Abhimanyu Singh Yadav (08547001036) 98-Jabalpur North, 100-Jabalpur West, 102-Sihora, 95-Patan, 96-Bargi, 97-Verma (09408603000) 109-Lanji, 112-Varaseoni, 115-Seoni, 108-Baihar, 111-Balaghat, 110-Paraswara, 113-Katangi and 114-Barghat, Rajesh Tuteja (09013850542) 125-Saunsar, 126-Chhindwara, 128-Pandhuran, 122-Junnardeo, 124-Chaurai, 123-Amarwara and 127-Parasiya and Piyush Mukherjee (08902199466) has been appointed expenses observer for 119-Narisnghpur, 121-Gadarwara, 137-Hoshangabad, 139-Pipariya, 140-Udaipura, 120-Tendukhera, 136-Seoni-Malwa and 138-Sohagpur.

GK Pati (09668140331) has been appointed expenses observer for Vidhan Sabha constituencies 1-Sheopur, 2-Vijaypur, 3-Sabalgarh, 4-Jaura, 5-Sumawali, 7-Dimni, 6-Morena and 8-Ambah, Gaurav Sinha (094178749095) 9-Ater, 10-Bhind, 11-Lahar, 12-Mehgaon, 22-Datia, 20-Sewdha, 13-Gohad and 21-Bhander, Har Kripal Khattana (09417879095) 14-Gwalior Rural, 16-Gwalior East, 19-Dabra, 24-Pohari, 17-Gwalior South, 15-Gwalior, 18, Bhitwar and 23-Karera, Himanshu Raina (09527947929) 27-Kolaras, 29-Guna, 33-Chanderi, 25-Shivpuri, 34-Mungawali, 32-Ashok Nagar, 26-Pichhor and 28, Bamori, Ishtkar Beg (09868878177) 36-Khurai, 41-Sagar, 147-Sironj, 40-Naryawali, 146-Kurwai, 35-Bina, 37-Surkhi and 148-Shamshabad, Jaspreet Singh Sukheja (09888217370) 43-Tikamgarh, 44-Jatara, 46-Niwari, 52-Bijawar, 47-Khargapur, 48-Maharajpur, 45-Prithvipur and 51-Chhatarpur, Moolchand Verma (09679900990) 39-Rahli, 55-Damoh, 57-Hata, 53-Malehra, 54-Pathriya, 56-Jabera, 38-Devri and 42-Banda, Kapil Raj (09930801585) 49-Chandla, 58-Pawai, 60-Panna, 92-Vijayraghavgarh, 94-Bahoriband, 50-Raj Nagar, 59-Gunnaur and 93-Mudwara, Ajay Kumar Mishra

(09619807711) 149-Berasia, 152-Bhopal South-West, 155-Huzur, 150-Bhopal North, 151-Narela, 153-Bhopal Central, 159-Sehore and 154-Govindpura and Anand Swaroop (09530400086) 204-Purushottam Tripuri (09530400056) has been appointed expenses observer for 130-Amla, 131-Betul, 133-Bhainsdehi, 132-Ghoradongri, 134-Timarni, 129-Multai and 176-Harsud.

MK Meena (09998950008) has been appointed expenses observer for 144-Vidisha Vidhan Sabha constituency.

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 20, 2014

Dy Election Commissioner to review poll preparations in West Bengal

"Vinod Zutshi will review the entire poll preparations in the state in a high-level meeting with all district magistrates and superintendents of police on March 25," Joint Chief Electoral Officer Saibal Barman said here today.

Ahead of the March 25 meeting, state Chief Electoral Officer Sunil Gupta today had a session with all DMs and SPs through video conferencing to review poll preparedness across the state. "Law and order, execution of non-bailable warrants (NBW) and violation of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) were among other things that we discussed in today's video-conference with the DMs and SPs," Barman said.

Speaking on the deployment pattern, Barman said each polling booth would have armed guards, while the Jangalmahal would have an improved security cover compared to the security arrangements in the 2011 Assembly elections.

"KLO is a major concern this time and the Commission is taking all necessary steps to avert any threats and ensure a peaceful election in the areas where this outfit has its presence," he said. Barman, however, did not elaborate on the state's requirement of central force, saying, "We are yet to assess the situation and our requirement. It will take some more time."

"However, the state forces have already been put on the normal drill and it will be decided later on how many of them will be deployed on election duty," he said.

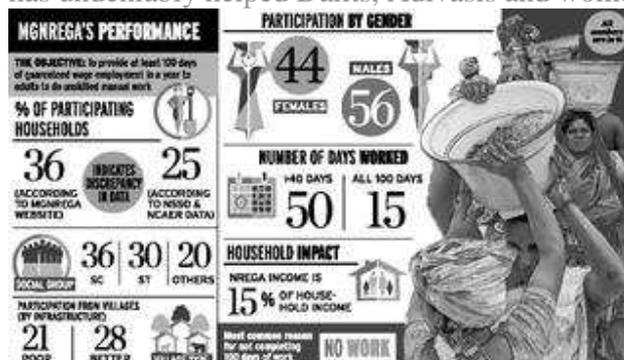
EMPLOYMENT

HINDU, MAR 22, 2014

Employer of the last resort?

SONALDE DESAI

The Centre's rural employment guarantee scheme can be substantially improved, but it has undeniably helped Dalits, Adivasis and women find work



In an era of growing globalisation and rising inequality, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) stands out as a unique attempt to provide a social safety net via a massive public works programme. The government as an employer of the last resort is an idea that has existed in policy discourse around the world for much of the 20th century, gaining most currency during the Great Depression in the United States. However, MGNREGA takes this policy to a new realm because of its massive reach, universal nature, and its initiation during a period of rapid economic growth.

It is a good time to explore the reach and impact of MGNREGA. India Human Development Surveys of 2004-05 and 2011-12, organised by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the University of Maryland, surveyed about 27,000 rural households in 2004-05, before the Act was passed, and in 2011-12 when the programme was implemented in all districts. Hence, it provides a unique opportunity to examine household well-being before and after the implementation of the Act.

Our scorecard on MGNREGA focusses on three issues: (i) The reach and targeting of the programme; (ii) Experience of the households that participated in MGNREGA; and (iii) Broader changes in the rural labour markets between 2005 and 2012.

The MGNREGA website claims that 500 lakh households — about 36 per cent of rural households — obtained employment from MGNREGA in 2011-12. Our household survey finds only about 25 per cent of the rural households participating in MGNREGA. Another independent household survey, the National Sample Survey of 2009-10, also finds about 25 per cent of households participating in MGNREGA.

Well-targeted scheme

Regardless of the discrepancy between administrative statistics and actual usage, the programme is remarkably well-targeted. This targeting operates at three levels. At the village level, the uptake in villages with low levels of infrastructure is higher (28 per cent) than in villages with better infrastructure (21 per cent). It is more difficult to organise new programmes in more backward areas, so MGNREGA's success in achieving this goal is quite remarkable.

At the household level, households from the marginalised communities — Dalits and Adivasis — are far more likely to participate in MGNREGA (36 per cent and 30 per cent respectively) than other households (20 per cent). At the individual level, older workers are disproportionately more likely to participate in MGNREGA than in the general labour force. Women, too, have higher participation rates; although only 29 per cent of all non-agricultural wage workers are women, 44 per cent of all MGNREGA workers are women.

However, even for those households doing MGNREGA work, the number of MGNREGA work-days is not very large. About 50 per cent of participating households work 40 or fewer days. MGNREGA administrative data shows that less than 10 per cent of the households complete their full 100 days; the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data record about 15 per cent of the participating households completing 100 days. In the run-up to the election, the government has raised the limits for Schedule Tribes (ST) households living in forest areas to 150 days, from 100. But 85 per cent of the participating ST households and 95 per cent of all ST households have not exhausted their current limit of 100 days. When asked by IHDS interviewers why they had not completed the full 100 days, 75 per cent of the MGNREGA participants cited “No Work” as the primary reason. It would seem more important to focus on ensuring the full 100 days of work for everyone than to increase entitlement to 150 days.

For those households that participate in MGNREGA, the income from MGNREGA forms about 14 per cent of their total income. While the Act mandates payment in cash for people who are not offered work, we found few respondents knew about this provision and even fewer availed of it.

It is not clear whether MGNREGA is providing alternative sources of work or attracting people who were formerly underemployed or disguisedly employed. The IHDS data document an increase of just five days of work for men over a 12-month period in rural areas and four days for women. This is not a massive increase, suggesting that some of the MGNREGA work may have replaced rather than added to former work.

The IHDS also documents other changes in rural labour markets. Among workers, non-farm work has grown substantially while an exclusive agriculture focus has declined. The proportion of individuals who focus solely on agricultural activities— cultivation, agricultural labour, and animal care— has gone down from 51 per cent of men aged 15-59 to 35 per cent; for women the drop is from 84 per cent to 66 per cent. Much of this drop comes from changes in agricultural wage work and caring for animals; own-account cultivation is unchanged. While we do not know that MGNREGA caused these changes,

the alternative non-farm employment is certainly part and parcel of broader changes in rural labour markets.

Increase in daily wage

This declining agricultural employment has accompanied wage growth for daily wage workers, particularly agricultural labour. For male agricultural workers, daily wages in constant terms grew from Rs. 90 a day to Rs. 134; for male non-agricultural workers they grew from Rs.126 a day to Rs. 155. The growth for women agricultural workers was from Rs. 62 to Rs. 91 and for non-agricultural workers from Rs. 77 to Rs. 111.

These wage increases for women are particularly interesting. Historically, the lack of non-agricultural work has constrained women's wages. If MGNREGA is in any way associated with the growth in women's wages, this is a positive outcome. But these observations may also point to a real concern for farmers — a possible lack of availability of agricultural workers and high wages during harvest time. Rising agricultural wages for both men and women and simultaneously declining agricultural wage work suggest that it would be a sensible precaution to ensure that MGNREGA work is not timed for the peak agricultural periods.

The above discussion has noted several concerns with MGNREGA, particularly the discrepancy between official data and household reports on usage as well as the potential wage impact. But we have also noted that the programme has been particularly successful in providing employment to Dalits, Adivasis, and women, thereby serving as an attractive employer of the last resort to the most disadvantaged workers.

(Sonalde Desai, Omkar Joshi and Reeve Vanneman are with the National Council of Applied Economic Research and the University of Maryland. This is Part 2 of a five-part series on the NCAER's new household survey. The views expressed are personal.)

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 19, 2014

Govt appoints new RBI representative on UBI board

[United Bank of India](#) (UBI) on Tuesday said the [ministry of finance](#) had nominated Parvathy V Sundaram in place of Surekha Marandi as representative of [Reserve Bank of India](#) (RBI) on the board of directors of the bank, with immediate effect. Sundaram has also been inducted as member of the audit committee of the board.

Both Sundaram and Marandi are chief general managers at RBI.

Earlier, RBI had written to the finance ministry on the steps needed to turn around UBI. One was to permit the central bank to supersede the board of the state-run lender. The finance ministry has also been keeping a close watch on the performance of UBI and has directed its executives to submit a daily report on bad loan recoveries.

The bank's loan sanctioning power has also been capped at Rs 10 crore, pending further instructions.

UBI closed the third quarter with gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of Rs 8,546 crore. Fresh slippages topped Rs 3,000 crore, while the bank's net loss doubled from a quarter ago to Rs 1,238 crore in the October-December period.

The Central Vigilance Commission had also sought details on some of the loans disbursed by the bank in the recent months.

The post of chairman and managing director at UBI is lying vacant after the resignation of Archana Bhargava, who opted out because of health issues.

[Base rate](#) cut

Separately, UBI said it had decided to reduce its base rate or minimum lending rate by 25 basis points with effect from March 24. The revised base rate will be 10.25 per cent.

Only a month ago, the bank had increased its base rate by 25 basis points to 10.50 per cent and reduced its one-year and above term deposit rate by an equal amount. The move, the bank had said, would allow it to improve its margin and profitability. It did not offer any reason for again to paring its lending rate.

STATESMAN, MAR 21, 2014

RBI Dy Governor Chakrabarty resigns

New Delhi, 20 March: In a surprise move, Reserve Bank Deputy Governor KC Chakrabarty has resigned three months before his term was to end.

Mr Chakrabarty has “requested to be relieved earlier than the scheduled (term ending 15 June 2014),” a top government source said.

Mr Chakrabarty, 62, who was appointed as RBI Deputy Governor in 2009, could not be contacted.

The source, however, did not say why he has sought an early end to his term. Mr Chakrabarty was appointed as RBI Deputy Governor for a three-year term on 15 June 2009 and was subsequently given a two-year extension. His extended term was to come to end on 15 June 2014.

Mr Chakrabarty, according to an official, will remain in office till 25 April. “Mr Chakrabarty has requested for slightly earlier departure than scheduled term-end. He has requested to be relieved by 25 April... for personal reasons,” the official said. Since his term was ending in June, the finance ministry has already set up a search committee, headed by RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, to find his replacement. As many as five PSU bankers have been called for interviews for the coveted post. Mr Chakrabarty's current assignments at RBI include guiding and overseeing areas pertaining to supervision of banks, currency management, financial stability, customer service, rural credit and human resource management.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, MAR 19, 2014

Cabinet secy asks DIPP to prepare ‘brief’ for new government

The Cabinet secretary has asked the DIPP, a wing of the ministry of commerce and industry that deals with foreign investment, to prepare a ‘brief’ on current issues for the next government which is expected to assume office in May.

“The cabinet secretary has asked the DIPP to prepare a brief write-up on major thrust areas, programmes and challenges to implement them. It will be a kind of status report on development activities so that the new government is informed,” sources told PTI.

The report, sources added, will help the new government to take an appropriate view on policy matters.

The note of the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) would include issues related to the national manufacturing policy and liberalisation of foreign direct investment in several sectors.

The cabinet secretary may also ask other departments dealing with critical issues to prepare briefs for the new government, the sources said.

The general elections are scheduled to be held in nine phases beginning April 7 and counting of votes will take place on May 16.

HEALTH SERVICES

HINDU, MAR 20, 2014

24 private hospitals refuse CGHS benefits

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has suspended empanelment and issued show cause notices to five hospitals for disregarding Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) cards.

The empanelment of Fortis Escorts Heart Institute at Faidabad, Delhi Heart and Lung Institute, M.S. Ramaiah Memorial Institutes and Fortis Jaipur has been suspended for six months.

Fortis group of hospitals, Moolchand, National Heart Institute, Narayana Hrudayalaya, KIMS and Yashodha Hospitals are among the 24 private hospitals that have decided to discontinue credit facilities to the eligible categories of CGHS beneficiaries.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Ministry said there have been reports that private hospitals on the panel of CGHS are denying credit facilities to the eligible CGHS beneficiaries for delay in settlement of hospitals bills. Lower package rates and inadmissible deductions have also been reported to be the other reasons for withdrawal of agreed cashless /credit facilities.

Assuring the CGHS beneficiaries that most of the private hospitals are continuing to extend the cashless facilities, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has said it would ensure that the CGHS empanelled private hospitals continue to extend cashless /credit facilities to the eligible CGHS.

The Ministry has taken special steps for clearance of pending hospital bills on a priority basis and the pendency of bills is almost cleared, it said while adding that the CGHS has invited bids for revision of package rates through a transparent tender process. Steps are under way to conclude the process early.

BUSINESS STANDARD, MAR 19, 2014

US doctors uneasy about Indian drugs

India supplies about 40% of generic and over-the-counter drugs used in the United States

Some US doctors are becoming concerned about the quality of generic [drugs](#) supplied by Indian manufacturers following a flurry of recalls and import bans by the Food and Drug Administration.

India supplies about 40 per cent of generic and over-the-counter drugs used in the United States, making it the second-biggest supplier after Canada.

In recent months, the FDA, citing quality control problems ranging from data manipulation to sanitation, has banned the importation of products from [Ranbaxy](#) Laboratories Ltd, [Wockhardt](#) Ltd and, most recently, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.

“I’m just beginning to realize the gravity of the problem,” said Dr Steven Nissen, head of cardiology at the Cleveland Clinic.

“It’s terrible and it is starting to get a lot of traction among physicians.”

Indian drugmakers are by no means the only companies to recall products or be warned by the FDA about manufacturing problems.

For instance, quality control failures at Johnson & Johnson forced the company to recall dozens of products over the past five years, ranging from artificial hips to children’s Tylenol.

And last year, Germany’s Boehringer Ingelheim said it would shut down its the US contract manufacturing unit, Ben Venue Laboratories, after it was cited for repeated manufacturing violations that led to shortages of the cancer drug Doxil.

India’s drugmakers, a \$14 billion industry, reject any criticism that their products are inferior to drugs made in other countries.

“We have heard doctors making generalized statements, without being specific on any product or company,” said D G Shah, Secretary General of the Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, a trade group representing large Indian drugmakers.

“This is a deliberate and serious campaign to malign the Indian generic industry,” Shah said.

If US doctors come across a medicine that does not meet quality standards, they should report it to regulators, he said. “Doctors are not in a position to judge whether manufacturing processes are correct or not. That is the US FDA’s job.”

Generic drugs account for nearly 85 percent of medicines prescribed in the United States and the government is relying on them to help rein in healthcare costs.

“We are losing control over what people are swallowing,” said Dr Harry Lever, a

cardiologist at the Cleveland Clinic who is trying raise awareness of the matter among US lawmakers. “Now, when a patient comes in who is not doing well, the first thing I do is look at their drugs and find out who makes it.”

Increasingly, Lever said, he is recommending patients seek out generic drugs from specific manufacturers outside India.

“I’m tending to stay away from India,” he said. “There’s something wrong. Too many things are happening.”

Indian doctors hit back

Indian physicians do not share the concerns. “Our drugs are being sold in many countries and being accepted, so we have no issues,” said Narendra Saini, Secretary General of the Indian Medical Association, a voluntary body of 215,000 doctors. “How do I know that Western drugs are better than our drugs?”

A 2012 report by India’s parliament alleged collusion between pharmaceutical firms and officials at the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), the country’s drugs regulator, and described an agency that was both understaffed and underqualified.

Saini said physicians trust that the CDSCO is taking care of the quality and the standard of the drugs made in India.

“We very much trust those medicines,” he added. Representatives of Ranbaxy, Sun and Wockhardt were not immediately available to comment.

Dr Joel Zonszein, director of the Clinical Diabetes Center at Montefiore Medical Center in New York, said he is concerned about the quality of generic drugs in general, not just those from India. He cited, as an example, his experience with the diabetes drug metformin.

“When patients open the bottle of medication it smells like dead fish,” he said. Zonszein did not know which company made the foul-smelling drug.

Physicians do not have a say in which generic drug a patient receives, as that depends on which products are stocked by individual pharmacies. If a patient wants to avoid a certain manufacturer, he or she may have to change pharmacies.

Doctors may specify that the branded version of a drug be dispensed, but insurance companies frequently refuse to pay for them.

Dr Richard Kovacs, who heads a number of American College of Cardiology committees and sits on its board of trustees, said doctors may need to play a greater role monitoring the medications prescribed by their practices.

“The average US cardiologist has been able to assume that the drugs were safe and effective. It now appears we need to be more vigilant as a profession, and assist the FDA by reporting cases where we are concerned about irregularities in the drugs supplied to our patients,” he said.

Hard to keep up

FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg, who recently returned from her first official visit to India, is urging greater collaboration between the two countries. During her visit, the FDA and India’s Ministry of Health and Family Welfare signed a statement of intent to cooperate to prevent the distribution of unsafe drugs.

Shortly afterwards, Drug Controller General of India G N Singh, said in an interview that the country will follow its own quality standards. “The FDA may regulate its country, but it can’t regulate India on how India has to behave or how to deliver,” he said.

Some companies seem to be responding to the FDA’s actions.

Piyush Nahar, an analyst with Jefferies India Private Ltd who recently met with a number of Indian drugmakers, said in a recent report that most companies “have increased their investment” in compliance and some are considering investing in US or European facilities “to overcome challenges relating to both regulations and perceptions.”

The array of recalls and warning letters can be dizzying.

Ranbaxy recently recalled over 64,000 bottles of a generic cholesterol-lowering drug after doses were mixed up in a bottle, and Sun began recalling 2,528 bottles of a diabetes drug after a bottle was found to contain an epilepsy treatment.

Those mix-ups follow a recall in January by Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories Ltd of more than 58,000 bottles of its heartburn drug lansoprazole due to a microbial contamination.

“It’s hard to be sure on a day-to-day basis with the array of medications that you have to be potentially aware of that there’s a specific problem with a specific medication from a specific generic manufacturer,” said Dr Elliott Antman, a cardiologist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston.

The medical community is dependent on agencies such as the FDA, he added. “The bottom line for me is we have to make sure they have sufficient resources to do their job correctly.”

To Dr Jason Gaglia, a diabetes expert at the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston, the warning letters and import bans indicate the FDA is doing its job.

“Is it scary? Yes. But to me it means the system is working,” he said.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

STATESMAN, MAR 21, 2014

Ukraine severs key ties with Russia

Germany to suspend major arms deal with Moscow

Agence France-Presse

Ukraine has announced plans to drop out of a key post-Soviet alliance and slap entry visas on Russians while also preparing for a possible Crimean withdrawal following the Kremlin's absorption of the peninsula.

Kiev's first firm response to Russia's claim to the strategic Black Sea peninsula came yesterday as a deadline expired on an ultimatum set by the acting president for Crimea's separatist leaders to release the captured head of the Ukrainian navy.

The spiralling crisis prompted the White House to warn Russia it was “creating a dangerous situation” and the Nato commander to call the Kremlin's seizure of Crimea “the gravest threat to European security and stability since the end of the Cold War”.

Germany said it was suspending a major arms deal with Moscow ~ a signal that Washington's EU allies were willing to take more serious punitive steps against the Kremlin despite their heavy dependence on Russian energy supplies.

But Moscow appeared ready to up the diplomatic stakes, warning Washington it was preparing a “wide range” of counter measure should the USA follow through on threats to impose broad economic sanctions.

Pro-Russian forces earlier seized two Crimean navy bases and detained Ukraine's naval chief as Moscow tightened its grip on the flashpoint peninsula despite Western warnings that its “annexation” would not go unpunished.

Dozens of despondent Ukrainian soldiers ~ one of them in tears ~ filed out of Ukraine's main navy headquarters in the historic Black Sea port city of Sevastopol after it was stormed by hundreds of pro-Kremlin protesters and masked Russian troops.

The local prosecutor's office said Ukraine's navy commander Sergiy Gayduk ~ appointed after his predecessor switched allegiance in favour of Crimea's pro-Kremlin authorities at the start of the month ~had been detained.

Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council chief Andriy Parubiy said Kiev had decided to withdraw from the Moscow-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) alliance that replaced the Soviet Union and to slap visas on Russians who sought to enter the country.

British Premier David Cameron, meanwhile, has said that G7 nations must discuss the permanent expulsion of Russia from the wider G8.

Ukraine warships

Pro-Russian forces seized three Ukrainian warships today and Ukraine said its troops were being threatened in Crimea as the USA announced new sanctions against Russia for its annexation of the Black Sea peninsula.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund said it made “significant progress” in talks with Ukraine's new Western-backed government over the resumption of a vital support programme. The announcement puts the new Kiev administration closer to seeing the release of billions of dollars in assistance.

TRIBUNE, MAR 20, 2014

No longer a secret

The govt must declassify Henderson Brooks Report

THE Henderson Brooks Report on the 1962 Sino-Indian War posted online by an Australian journalist has revealed what is already well known in government, defence and academic circles - a saga of political and military blunders which almost 52 years ago had cost the lives of over 3,000 soldiers and, even more significantly, had resulted in a serious loss of both face and territory of a nation that aspires to be a power to reckon with.

The report, which the government has declined to authenticate, has been posted online by Neville Maxwell, a former correspondent with The Times, London, who in 1971 had published his landmark book India's China War. It has been known all these years that the book was based on the Henderson Brooks Report, which was first submitted in May 1963, i.e. six months after India's debacle in the Sino-Indian War. In addition, books authored by a number of retired Army officers who had fought in this war have either endorsed or further added to what Neville Maxwell has written, thereby leaving little to imagination. Yet, for over half a century the government has declined to declassify this 'operational review', which incidentally was limited to examining the state of preparedness, conduct and shortcomings of the Army formations involved in the war. For, Lieutenant-General Henderson Brooks was not mandated to examine the functioning of either the Army Headquarters or the Ministry of Defence.

The government should have declassified the Henderson Brooks Report in 1993, which is when the 30-year secrecy clause lapsed. It is a matter of dismay, if not insult, that the Indian public should be furnished a report examining India's military debacle by a foreign national living in faraway Australia who has had access to it for over four decades now. South Block's knee-jerk reaction to block Maxwell's website hardly reflects a progressive

mindset. The government must now declassify the entire report considering that there are some portions that are missing in Neville Maxwell's website. The government owes it to the public which has every right to know about India's humiliating defeat from a country with which New Delhi continues to have a disputed border even 67 years after Independence.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAR 18, 2014

US, EU impose sanctions on Russians as Crimea votes to split from Ukraine
Yashwant Raj

The United States on Monday imposed sanctions on seven Russians — including close aides of President Vladimir Putin — and four Ukrainians blamed for Russia's military incursion into Crimea.

The Europe Union also targeted Putin's aides, slapping sanctions on senior officials to pressure the Kremlin to abandon moves to annex Crimea. The EU list has 21 individuals who remained unidentified.

A senior US official described the measures, announced after the breakaway Ukrainian region of Crimea voted to join Russia in a referendum, as the "first comprehensive sanctions (against Russia) since the end of the Cold War". The referendum has been deemed unlawful by Kiev and the West.

US President Barack Obama said the sanctions made it clear "that there are consequences for their actions" in Crimea and that the US was ready to impose further sanctions if necessary.

Obama had earlier warned Russia of "costs" of military intervention in Crimea and Ukraine. The US President "broadly repeated" his threat in a phone conversation with Putin on Sunday.

The sanctions will freeze assets held by designated individuals in the US and prohibit American citizens from doing business with them. Officials said such sanctions are known to make it difficult for designated individuals to conduct business not only in the United States but also in Europe and Asia.

The seven Russians named in the sanctions were Vladislav Surkov, Sergey Glazyev, Leonid Slustky, Andreai Klishas, Valentina Matviyenko, Dmitri Rogozin and Yelena Mizulina.

Each of them "played a leading role as an ideologist, as a strategist and as an architect of the referendum strategy and is a leading proponent of formal annexation of Crimea by Russia", a senior US official said.

Surkov and Glaznyev are close aides of Putin and Rogozin is the deputy prime minister. The others include officials of the Russian parliament Duma.

Apart from deposed president Yanukovich, the Ukrainians named by the US are Crimea's prime minister Sergey Aksyonov and speaker of parliament Vladimir Konstantinov. Viktor Medvedchuk, a pro-Russia activist, is also named.

"The steps taken by the separatist leaders designated today and former president Yanukovich violate Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," US treasury official David Cohen said.

Obama said a diplomatic solution to the crisis was still possible if Russia pulls its troops back to barracks in Crimea, allows foreign observers to deploy and agrees to negotiate with Ukraine.

DECCAN HERALD, MAR 19, 2014

Putin signs treaty to make Crimea part of Russia

President Vladimir Putin today signed a treaty making Crimea part of Russia, in a historic redrawing of Russia's borders after he declared that the Black Sea region has always been "in the hearts" of his countrymen.

In a fast-moving sequence of events following Crimea's controversial secession referendum on Sunday, the Kremlin said Crimea was now considered part of Russia and no longer Ukrainian territory, shrugging off strong international objections.

"In the hearts and minds of people, Crimea has always been and remains an inseparable part of Russia," Putin said in an emotional address broadcast on television.

The move, which came sooner than expected, risks plunging the West and Russia into a crisis not seen since the Cold War and sent shock waves through the new authorities in Ukraine who took over after the ousting of pro-Kremlin president Viktor Yanukovich last month.

Putin signed the treaty with Crimean Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov and other Crimean leaders at a ceremony at the Kremlin attended by both houses of parliament. Lawmakers, who still have to formally ratify the treaty, broke into applause and cheers after the signing.

"The Republic of Crimea is considered to be part of Russia from the date of the signing of the treaty," the Kremlin said.

Crimea and the city of Sevastopol -- the home of the Russian Black Sea fleet which has special status -- are being incorporated as new constituent parts of the Russian Federation.

The signing -- which had not been flagged in advance -- came after Putin gave a fiery address at the Kremlin seeking to justify the incorporation of Crimea into Russia.

His defiant speech brushed off US and EU sanctions touted as the most severe against

Moscow since the end of the Cold War. Putin said Crimea belonged with Russia and he slammed the Soviet-era decision by Nikita Khrushchev to gift the peninsula to the Ukrainian Soviet republic as riddled with "violations".

"When Crimea suddenly ended up being in another state, Russia felt it was not simply robbed --- it was plundered."

He added that Russia was tired of being pushed into a corner by the West and said it had been repeatedly deceived on issues like NATO, missile defence and visa-free travel.

"On Ukraine the West crossed a line," he said, warning it against provoking Russia. "They are trying to drive us into a corner."

But he sought to play down fears that Russia was seeking to also incorporate parts of eastern and southern Ukraine. "We don't want the break-up of Ukraine. We do not need it," Putin said.

The seizure of Crimea by pro-Russian forces following the ouster of Yanukovich last month has been condemned around the world.

INTERNET

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 21, 2014

Google enhances encryption technology for email

WASHINGTON: Google has enhanced the encryption technology for its flagship email service in ways that will make it harder for the National Security Agency to intercept messages moving among the company's worldwide data centers.

Among the most extraordinary disclosures in documents leaked by former NSA systems analyst Edward Snowden were reports that the NSA had secretly tapped into the main communications links that connect Yahoo and Google data centers around the world.

Google, whose executive chairman, Eric Schmidt, said in November that he was outraged over the practice, didn't mention the NSA in Thursday's announcement, except in a veiled reference to "last summer's revelations."

Yahoo has promised similar steps for its email service by this spring.

Google and other technology companies have been outspoken about the US government's spy programs. The companies are worried more people will reduce their online activities if they believe almost everything they do is being monitored by the government. A decline in Internet use could hurt the companies financially by giving them fewer opportunities to show online ads and sell other services.

"Your email is important to you, and making sure it stays safe and always available is important to us," Nicolas Lidzborski, Gmail's security engineering lead, wrote in a blog post.

Lidzborski said that all Gmail messages a consumer sends or receives are now encrypted.

"This ensures that your messages are safe not only when they move between you and Gmail's servers, but also as they move between Google's data centers — something we made a top priority after last summer's revelations," Lidzborski wrote.

A secret Jan. 9, 2013, accounting indicated that NSA sends millions of records every day from Yahoo and Google internal networks to data warehouses at the NSA's suburban headquarters, according to documents released by Snowden and obtained by The Washington Post last year.

The NSA's principal tool to exploit the Google and Yahoo data links is a project called MUSCULAR, operated jointly with the agency's British counterpart, GCHQ. NSA and

GCHQ are copying entire data flows across fiber-optic cables that carry information between the data centers of the Silicon Valley giants, the Post reported.

The NSA has said it only focuses on targets with foreign intelligence value.

LIBRARIES

HINDU, MAR 21, 2014

Seminar on library upgrading

Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University will organise a national seminar on Library upgrading in animal sciences and e- resources here on March 21 and 22.

Dr. K. Veeranjanyalu, university librarian of Acharya N.G. Ranga University of Agriculture Sciences, Lalita K. Sami of Gulbarga University and other resource persons will speak. Librarians, library science teachers and research students will participate.

TIMES OF INDIA, MAR 19, 2014

22 city libraries to demand civic grants

Sameera Kapoor Munshi

NAVI MUMBAI: Government- certified libraries in the city will soon make a formal demand to the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) to provide them with grants. These 22 libraries, registered with the charity commission, were awarded government certificates at a function conducted by the Directorate of Libraries in Nerul on March 13

The libraries feel that that it is high time that the NMMC contributes towards their services of promoting reading. Comparisons are also being drawn with the financial aid extended by the Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation. "If smaller corporations like Vasai-Virar can manage to provide an aid of Rs 1 lakh to government-certified libraries in its jurisdiction, then why can't NMMC initiate a similar action? Libraries play a prominent role in inculcating reading habits among citizens," said president of Prof Manikrao Kirtane Vachanalay Subhash Kulkarni.

The preliminary plan includes bringing city libraries under a single fold and make the NMMC aware about its responsibilities. According to librarians, the civic body's responsibility towards public welfare doesn't end with providing roads, water and electricity. Tax payers also deserve to be provided with well- equipped libraries.

Librarians recalled that around a decade ago, the civic body had shown interest in this regard by granting Rs 5,000 for a year. "The financial assistance didn't last. In fact, it was discontinued the following year," added Kulkarni. Government provides grants to libraries as per their grade, ranging from Rs 48,000 to Rs 2.8 lakh. "There is a huge expenditure incurred in running a library and adding to the challenge is the dwindling interest among the younger generation in reading. Books don't come any cheaper and increasing the library fees won't attract more memberships. So it is a difficult situation," said Vijay Kedare, secretary of Vashi-based Town Library.

When the matter was brought to notice of an official from the estate department, he said, "Such a demand needs to be presented to the commissioner and mayor and finally approved by the general body," he said.

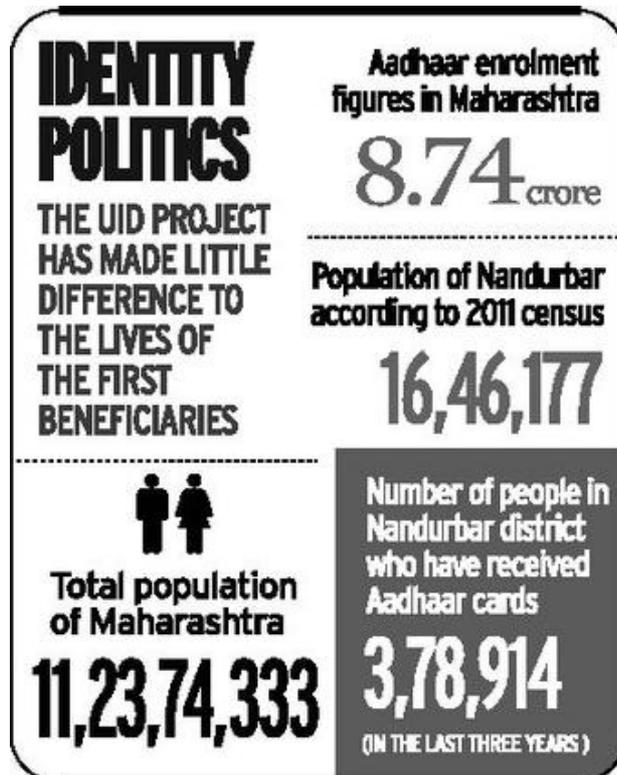
POLITICAL PARTIES

HINDU, MAR 18, 2014

For an all-party manifesto on health

VINOD PAUL

K. SRINATH REDDY



The entire spectrum of political leadership should take a pledge to transform the healthcare system of India in a decade

As the countdown to the next general election begins, political parties are making multiple promises to pull in votes. All the party leaders are committing to transforming the lives of people. But health, ironically, does not feature high on their priority list, even though it is the central pillar of a nation's development and productivity and the key to happiness for individuals, families and societies. Perhaps it is time to remind all parties that are seeking to govern the country that India's health challenges are perhaps the greatest for any single nation in the world.

We continue to face the unrelenting burden of the old and new threats of communicable diseases. The discussion on maternal and child health care, and nutrition, is far from being complete. We have also emerged as the world's epicentre of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart ailments and mental disorders. Nothing short of a massive transformation of the health system can address these challenges and meet the needs of citizens. People expect much more than a handful of select services under the limited ambit of the existing national programmes.

The good and bad news

The fundamentals have been laid down in the last few years as part of the National Rural Health Mission. More than 8,00,000 Accredited Social Health Activists workers, 33,000 nurses, 14,000 paramedics, 8,000 doctors and 3,000 specialists have been inducted; over 20,000 facilities have been constructed; and over 20,000 ambulances have been deployed. Medical graduate seats have increased by 55 per cent and postgraduate seats by 75 per cent. The Janani Suraksha Yojana has ensured that an additional 12 to 13 crore women are now delivering in government facilities and more than 6 lakh newborn babies are receiving care in neonatal care nurseries in district hospitals each year. Polio has been eliminated from the face of the country. The Infant mortality rate (IMR) too has declined from 68 to 42 per 1000 live births between 2000 and 2012. This is exciting, but not enough. In Brazil, the IMR is 13 and in China it is 12.

Each year, more than 40 million people, mostly in rural areas, are impoverished and run into massive debts to access healthcare. The devastating contribution of out-of-pocket medical expenses to poverty is often not fully appreciated by the media and policy-makers.

Long-term goals in healthcare transformation require a timeline that surely goes beyond the life of one Lok Sabha. The Centre and States also have to work in unison, regardless of which parties are in power. An all-party commitment to broad tenets is therefore absolutely essential to ensure focus, consistency, speed and accountability. We, therefore, call for a national manifesto on health affirmed by all parties.

On Universal Health Coverage

The Twelfth Plan strategy envisages Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as the long-term goal “that will unfold over two or three Plan periods.” The doctrine of UHC guarantees cashless access to a defined package of quality health services to all citizens. Such a system that has been in existence for long in developed countries such as Germany, the U.K., Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and in Scandinavian countries, has now been embraced by middle-income countries such as Thailand, Mexico and Brazil.

Given that India has a mixed health system, both public and private sectors have to work in tandem to provide appropriate, equitable and affordable care at all levels. The High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on UHC, constituted by the Planning Commission, envisioned a National Health System wherein a strong public sector leads the design and delivery of UHC, drawing on support from the private sector in a well-regulated framework. In this system, all citizens are entitled to a comprehensive package of primary, secondary and tertiary care services, and have access to government and accredited private facilities for obtaining services such as diagnostics, vaccines, drugs or surgeries as an entitlement, without having to pay at the point of care. It is estimated that UHC would require public spending on healthcare to the tune of 3.0 per cent of the GDP or more.

A debate on the details of how the Centre and the States will deliver UHC can be settled through democratic processes in due course. It is however time that the entire spectrum of political leadership expresses unequivocal allegiance to the high principles that embody commitment to health equity and pledge to transform the health system in a decade. And let these common principles be enshrined in the manifestoes of all the national parties.

The main priority

To begin with, parties must make healthcare a core priority for the next decade, to enable transformation of the healthcare system, while promoting pro-health policies in other sectors. We believe that the following five principles form the core national agenda on health and should be embraced by all the parties.

First, we call upon all the political parties to commit to the goal of achieving UHC in the country by the year 2025, and develop a clear roadmap thereof by mid-2015.

Second, public spending on health should be raised from a meagre 1.04 per cent of the GDP in the Eleventh Plan to 3 per cent by 2020, and 4 per cent by 2025.

Third, all essential drugs, including anti-cancer agents, should be made available free to all citizens in 3-4 years.

Fourth, standards of care including clinical guidelines, applicable to both the public and the private sectors, should be developed and enforced in the next five years.

Fifth, equity must be ensured in the provision of health services across districts, communities and gender.

The next government, irrespective of its party composition, should within the first 100 days of coming to power create an enabling mechanism to plan, mentor and implement the above promises. A National Health Regulatory and Development Authority would help to effectively advance this agenda.

This election should set a benchmark and transform the landscape of healthcare in India, no matter who comes to power.

(Vinod Paul is Head, Department of Pediatrics and WHO Collaborating Centre for Training and Research in Newborn Care, AIIMS, and K. Srinath Reddy is President, Public Health Foundation of India.)

This election should set a benchmark and transform the landscape of healthcare in India, no matter who comes to power

HINDU, MAR 23, 2014

Mamata unveils TMC's first national manifesto

TRINAMOOL'S NATIONAL AMBITIONS

AIMING HIGH: Trinamool Congress unveils national programme in tune with its hopes of post-election role at the Centre

- State funding of elections
- Judicial taxation and foreign trade policies
- Transparency in defence procurement
- No bifurcation of States without their consent

Our party will emerge as the third largest party. Electoral reform will be our first priority if a TMC-led government is formed at the Centre

— West Bengal CM & TMC leader
MAMATA BANERJEE



Those who talk of bringing development to Uttar Pradesh are the same people who oppress the people of U.P. and Bihar and chase them out of Maharashtra

— **RAHUL GANDHI**
in PRATAPGARH, U.P.

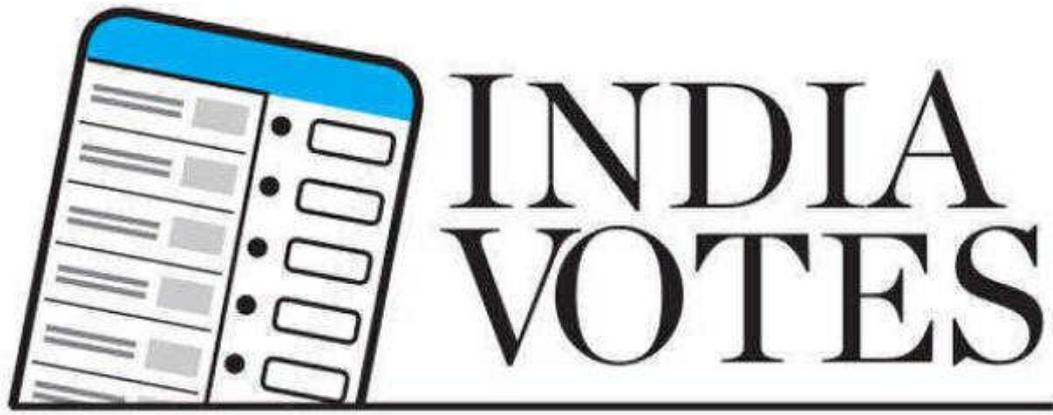


HAD ENOUGH?
My inner mind said 'enough is enough at Delhi and that I should work for the people of my hometown'

— **P. CHIDAMBARAM**



NEW ROLE
Prominent journalist M.J. Akbar joins BJP



With an eye on playing a decisive role in the formation of the next Central government, the Trinamool Congress on Saturday released its first-ever “national manifesto,” promising *roti , kapda aur makaan*(food, clothing and shelter).

Trinamool chairperson and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee stated that her party would bring in electoral reforms, make India corruption-free and empower the States.

The manifesto focused on areas of national relevance such as foreign policy, foreign trade, taxation and defence issues, including procurement, that the party had not dwelt upon much in the past.

The document emphasised that the “commitment to federalism in our Constitution” had not been carried out in spirit or in practice, and it was now time to “empower the States.”

‘Practical document’

Describing the manifesto as a “practical” document, Ms. Banerjee said “it is people-friendly, industry-friendly and agriculture-friendly.”

TELEGRAPH, MAR 18, 2014

Gogoi fights Modi with white paper

Guwahati, March 17: Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi today released a white paper making a comparison between contributions made by the NDA and UPA governments towards development of Assam.

The white paper is an attempt by the Congress government in the state to expose Narendra Modi’s “lies” about Prime Minister Manmohan Singh not doing anything for Assam.

Addressing a poll rally here on February 8, Narendra Modi accused Manmohan Singh of doing nothing for Assam, which he represented in Rajya Sabha for the last 23 years.

“Assam was in a precarious state during the tenure of BJP-led NDA government at the Centre on various fronts, such as deteriorating law and order, sagging financial condition, deplorable condition of roads and bridges, educational and health institutions, rural development and alarming unemployment problem,” Gogoi said.

“Grave injustice was meted out to Assam by the Eleventh Finance Commission constituted during the NDA rule. Assam got a meagre Rs 13,280 crore from the Commission. During the 12th and 13th Finance Commissions constituted under the UPA rule, Assam received a staggering Rs 24,329 crore and Rs 57,832 crore respectively,” he said.

The white paper mentioned that total transfer of money to Assam from the Centre during the tenure of the NDA was Rs 27,296 crore against the UPA’s whopping Rs 1,42,881 crore.

It further stated that the state got only two externally-aided projects during NDA rule, compared to 11 during the UPA regime.

“Modi’s love for Assam is confined to lip-service only,” Gogoi said.

“When there is so much talk about Modi tea, I would like to know what the BJP did for the welfare of tea workers and development of the tea industry in the state when it was in power,” he said.

The chief minister further said the NDA government left out important towns of Assam, such as Nagaon, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, among others, from the East-West Corridor.

“The NDA government did not provide sufficient funds for the gas cracker project and the Bogibeel bridge, resulting in inordinate delay,” the chief minister alleged.

He said not a single institution of national importance came up during the NDA regime while many such institutions, like the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology, National Institute of Design, National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Central Institute of Plastic Engineering and Technology, National Law School and Judicial Academy and the North East Regional Centre of Lakshimibai National Institute of Physical Education were established when the UPA was in power at the Centre.

“The facts and figures in the white paper strongly refute Narendra Modi’s hollow contention that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh did not do anything worthwhile for Assam,” he said.

“We leave it to the people to decide for themselves which government is more concerned about their well-being as we believe that people are the best judge,” he said.

Exuding confidence about a good show by the Congress in the Lok Sabha polls in Assam, Gogoi said their target is to win 12 of the 14 seats. He said he is sure that they will win not less than 10 seats.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

HINDU, MAR 19, 2014

The importance of Uttar Pradesh

With the Bharatiya Janata Party deciding to field its prime minister-in-waiting, Narendra Modi, from Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh has, unsurprisingly, become the focus of interest in this election. For long, it was an article of faith with pundits that the road to Delhi lay via U.P. The Congress under P.V. Narasimha Rao broke the myth; it won just five of 84 Lok Sabha seats from U.P. in the 1991 general election but nonetheless went on to form a government at the Centre. And yet, the sheer size of U.P. meant that the major political parties would continue to place the State at the centre of their electoral calculations. For the BJP especially, U.P. has been a high-stakes State with its overall electoral fortunes tied to its seat tally from here. The party held sway over U.P. right through the heady Ram mandir phase, winning 50-plus seats from the State in the general elections of 1991, 1996 and 1998. The party's electoral graph soared in tandem with its performance in U.P., and in 1998 it formed a coalition government at the Centre on the back of an incredible tally of 57 seats from the State. The critical importance of U.P. in the BJP's electoral and government-formation calculations can be gauged from the fact that, in all, the BJP won only 181 seats in that election.

The BJP's remarkable run ended in the 1999 general election, with the party's seat tally from U.P. plunging to a decadal low of 29. That year the BJP returned to power helped by its bandwagon of allies, but by 2004 its luck had run out. Over the past decade, the BJP has hit rock bottom in U.P., coinciding with the spectacular rise of the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. The coming of Mr. Modi has placed the BJP once again in top league, and indeed opinion polls uniformly suggest a U.P. seat tally for it in the region of 35 to 40 — a remarkable potential upswing in fortunes for a party seemingly without a hope until recently. It helps Mr. Modi that he has arrived at a time of deep despair with the incumbent United Progressive Alliance government. The UPA's 10-year incumbency and the policy paralysis and corruption witnessed during its second term appear to have combined to push Mr. Modi to the forefront in this election. However, no election is won till it is won. And Mr. Modi faces a new challenge in the form of the indefatigable Arvind Kejriwal. The Aam Aami Party's convener has already raised the pitch by relentlessly attacking the Gujarat Model. With his possible emergence as a candidate from Varanasi, the holy city is bound to witness a David versus Goliath battle. Mr. Modi's entry, and its sheer size, have restored to Uttar Pradesh a pre-eminent position in this election.

POSTAL SERVICES

BUSINESS LINE, MAR 17, 2014

India Post open to e-commerce prospects

K RAM KUMAR

Keen to rebuild parcel network, operations and delivery set up

India Post (also known as Department of Posts) wants to restructure/re-build its parcel network, operations and delivery set up to meet the needs of e-commerce players to cater to their need for transportation and delivery of parcels/packets.

The Department, which comes under the administrative control of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, has 1,39,086 post offices in its network. These post offices provide the last mile delivery link for parcels by reaching out to customers at their doorsteps.

With the help of a consultant, the Department, according to its project document, will examine its existing network in terms of its utility/relevance vis-à-vis the new business opportunities (e-commerce) and emerging clientele and how to make it more effective.

This move comes as e-commerce driven transportation and delivery of parcels and packets is emerging as the new growth engine for the courier, express and parcel market the world over and India.

The network building/optimisation exercise for parcels will enable India Post to improve quality of service, helping it to tap the opportunities offered by e-commerce.

According to its Book of Information, India Post's parcel product, including speed post and express parcel post, traffic saw a 43 per cent jump in 2011-12 to 40 crore against 28 crore in the previous year.

According to industry body Assocham, India's e-commerce market increased from about \$2.5 billion in 2009 to \$16 billion in 2013 and is expected to touch \$56 billion by 2023.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated March 17, 2014)

POVERTY

HINDU, MAR 18, 2014

Pulling a village out of poverty

ALEX PAUL MENON

In 2012, the young IAS officer, **Alex Paul Menon** was the Collector of Chhattisgarh's Sukma district. On the evening of April 21, 2012, Mr. Menon had just finished his lunch and was about to preside over a function to announce the introduction of some agricultural schemes. But there was a squad of Maoists hiding among the villagers, and they suddenly launched an attack, killing two of Mr. Menon's bodyguards. He was then taken hostage.

Mr. Menon was released after spending 13 days in Maoist captivity. He is now the deputy CEO at the office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Chhattisgarh. In the following piece, Mr. Menon explains how small steps of governance can go a long way in changing the lives of people.

Chindhbarri is an auxiliary village in Chhattisgarh's Dhamtari district, about 140 kilometres from the State capital Raipur. It is a part of the Bastar Development Council, eight kilometres away from Bagrumnala, where Dr. Binayak Sen set up a clinic in 1994.

Chindhbarri is a tiny tribal hamlet of 75 families. In 2010, I was posted in this area as the chief executive officer of the zila panchayat. Though close to the periphery of the Gangrael dam, the village faced an acute shortage of water; 95 per cent of the households were Scheduled Tribes, and 85 per cent households below the poverty line. The average land holding was five acres and 65 per cent of farmers were marginal. Food was hard to come by. Only 38 per cent of families had food to last from six months to a year, while 50 per cent of families had food that would last them for six months or less. As a result, distress migration was quite common.

We decided to reverse the fate of Chindhbarri.

First steps to a renewal

Many years ago, the social activist, Baba Amte had shown us the way forward with his unique water conservation models. We decided to replicate them in Chindhbarri. Backed by a non-governmental organisation and its committed volunteers, participatory micro-planning exercises were taken up by self-help groups and the local community. To begin with, we listed on a sheet of paper, the landholding size of each household, and its nature and needs. Then, we put down a list of various schemes under subheadings. All benefits possible from these schemes were listed to match the needs of each household. The idea was to move away from the usual bureaucratic jargon of "targeting numbers" to "targeting names."

We chose one particular patch of land, measuring 40 hectares, and initiated water conservation plans all along it. We soon realised that based on the flow of water, the

ponds needed to be dug in two private holdings. This is the situation in many tribal areas, as the predominant method is flood irrigation that warrants having your field in the area where water flows and stops, but water conservation necessitates ponds and farm ponds. By this time the village was so enthused that two villagers, Shankar and Maakan, volunteered to donate five acres each.

According to the plan, each household was to get farm ponds and fish seed, cattle protection trenches, dugwells, bund plantations, cash crops like mango and cashew, poultry sheds, vegetable seed kits, equipment for rice intensification, vermicompost pits, bio-gas and borewells. We also arranged to put up low-cost poly houses, or *sabji kuty*, according to the needs of each household.

Historically, the most marginalised residents of a village occupy the ridge or the periphery. We started from there. To conserve water, the ridge had to be cured first. This was undertaken for a set of 32 farmers for one patch for the first year, and later replicated in two other patches in two batches. Rs.143 lakh was spent by converging the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme with other schemes in a systematic way for three years. The funds are largely from the employment guarantee scheme. The work season for the employment guarantee scheme (September to June) falls in two financial years (September to March and April to June).

For a villager, a financial year has no resonance in his way of life. While he looks at the work season, we expect him to work according to the financial year. We decided to tweak the rules to provide double the sanctions in a single financial year, citing the work season spread across two financial years. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise as more spending appeared to instill confidence in the villagers.

Reaping the results

Four years later, this is what happened — 114 acres of land were levelled and banded and made suitable for cultivation; 225 acres of land came under irrigation, thereby increasing paddy productivity twofold, and the village saw a big increase in vegetable, maize, fish and poultry production. Today, vegetable cultivation enables 60 per cent of families to earn up to Rs.20,000 an annum. Nobody has had to take a loan from the village's grain bank in the past two years. Distress migration has stopped. In the last two years, many villagers have been able to buy assets like mobile phones, motorcycles and television sets. Now, Chhindbarri's gram sabha has decided to pay tax to the gram panchayat in order to strengthen it.

Chindhbarri is self-sufficient today and its people do not need freebies or doles. The spark that triggered off an experiment in Chindhbarri has now spread to 47 other panchayats and is still growing.

All this began with a small step: putting all the components of food on the plates of 32 families. We chose not to splatter our schemes and benefits but place them all on a single

platter according to the hunger needs of the families. And, it has worked as a miracle cure.

Some of us who are in the Indian Administrative Service often debate the necessity of straitjacketed schemes of the government and the needs of rural India that are different in terms of scale, priority, need and participation. I'd often have my doubts and would say: "How long are we going to chop the foot to fit the sandal?" This provoked a senior retired colleague to reply with a smirk: "panchayat plans, planning commission schemes." But the Chindhbarri experiment has shown that it is possible to pull a village out of poverty instead of letting it be the beneficiary of erratic schemes for decades. It stands as a tall example of what participative, decentralised planning can do to a community and what is possible once a motivated community decides to plan, execute, monitor and measure outcome all by itself.

As I write this, my mind is awash in questions. How long is it going to take us to eliminate poverty from every Indian household? Convergence is a buzzword in the administrative services. But what I fail to understand is this: if panchayats plan for every household as per its needs, and allotments are made with minimal use of schemes and non-restrictive guidelines, what is the need then for this forced marriage of schemes that we call "convergence"? With many of our allocations in schemes based on unreliable secondary data, and thereby an unhindered diversion of funds, what stops us from having a computer in every panchayat, collecting household data pertinent to all sectors, updating it periodically and planning and allocating based on primary household data?

This country has multiple schemes, multiple computerised databases for these schemes, and then multiple cards and multiple servers storing countless data, wasting valuable financial, human and energy resources. Are we, an IT superpower, going to wait for another 60 years to collect and collate household level data, plan and allocate as per household level needs, and till then, keep on inventing scheme after scheme? Isn't it time for us to pause, take a breath, collect, collate, computerise every household level data, plan for every household and cull poverty in a clean stroke? Isn't it time to have integrated databases, weeding out duplicates, and running targeted, name-wise allotments?

I have been reading volume after volume of committee reports and scheme guidelines to find answers, but the compass in my simple mind points to Chindhbarri alone.

This brings me to the story of a Zen guru who would tell his disciples: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." One day he was visited by one of his disciples with a nagging problem. "Master," the disciple said, "I have five people who are hungry and thirsty, and I have rice, curry, soup, pickle and water. How do I divide it among all the five? On the pretext of equality if I divide all the five items equally among the five, nobody's thirst or hunger is quenched. If I divide five items into one for each, again, I end up satisfying nobody." The learned guru smiled and replied, "Give all five items to the neediest and the one most willing to find food for

others, and after his hunger and thirst are quenched, you both jointly find food for the rest.”

It is the Zen master’s formula that should guide our approach today.

(Alex Paul Menon is an IAS officer. E-mail: alexpaulmenon@gmail.com)

Is the blind implementation of social welfare schemes the only approach of governance in rural India, especially in Maoist-affected areas? A small village in Chhattisgarh provides a viable alternative

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

HINDU, MAR 21, 2014

Two governments to function from Secretariat

Beginning June 2 the sprawling Secretariat complex of united Andhra Pradesh will host two new State governments, that of the new government of Telangana and residuary Andhra Pradesh.

Though there was speculation that successor Andhra Pradesh will be allotted the MCHRD complex, it is certain now that the two Telugu Chief Ministers and their secretariats will function from the existing Secretariat complex which is big enough to house the political executives and bureaucrats of the two governments when the two States become a reality from the appointed day.

The nine spacious blocks -- A, B, C, D, J, K, L and the recently renovated H – north and south blocks would be divided between the two States keeping the contiguity and security aspects in focus but the two secretariats will have separate entrance gates, it is learnt. Governor E.S.L. Narasimhan, who is the final authority to distribute the government buildings for various purposes in the common capital of Hyderabad between the two successor States, held a meeting here on Thursday with the committee on government buildings in Hyderabad as part of the bifurcation process.

Governor seeks report

The Governor sought a report from the committee within a week listing various alternatives and locations for the Secretariat, Assembly and Council buildings, offices of Directorates, accommodation for Ministers and legislators and guesthouses for allocation between the two States. The Ministers' and MLAs' quarters (both old and new complexes) would be distributed between the two States in the ratio of 58:42.

WOMEN

HINDU, MAR 18, 2014

Delhi's working women ready to relocate for safety: study

Due to lack of safety, around 43 per cent of working in Delhi are willing to relocate outside the city even at the cost of a pay cut, according to a recent study. The survey conducted by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry included working women, students and job aspirants. The survey "Women Safety in Delhi: Issues and Challenges to Employment" is based on the feedback of 3,400 women in Delhi.

It found that working women were inclined to work in day shifts with nearly 80 per cent of the respondents opting for day shifts. About 9 per cent said they worked in flexible shift timings and nearly seven per cent opted for rotational shifts. A very small proportion of women respondents (4 per cent) worked in night shifts. Around 64 per cent of working women said crimes against women had impacted their productivity as they now hesitated to stay in their workplace during late hours. A majority of women respondents said they depended on public transport to commute to their destinations. Many respondents felt fast track courts to deal with crimes against women and safer public transport were important for women's safety in the national capital.

HINDU, MAR 21, 2014

Call for greater participation of women in governance

'Only 9.9% of parliamentary or ministerial posts held by women'

Greater participation of women in governance is necessary for highlighting the various social issues they face in the country, according to former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao.

She was delivering the Benjamin Bailey Memorial Lecture 2014 on the topic, 'Challenges to Democracy in a Multicultural and Globalised World: A Woman's Perspective', at CMS College here on Thursday.

Pointing to the inequality suffered by women owing to patriarchal structures in society, Ms. Rao said the Women in Politics Map 2014, launched by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, had ranked India 73^{+r}_{+d} in terms of participation of women in politics with just 9.9 per cent of parliamentary or ministerial posts being occupied by women.

"Moreover, the hurdle of complete literacy is yet to be crossed. At 65 per cent, female literacy is 16 per cent lower than the male literacy rate. Violence is a constant companion in most women's lives with at least 34 per cent of Indian women having experienced violence at least once in their lives. There is the haunting and shameful statistic of how nearly 6,00,000 girls are missing in India each year because of sex-selective abortions. Rape, molestation and sexual harassment are other manifestations of violence against women — literally examples of war against women in peacetime."

According to her, active participation of women in governance can help bring the issues that affect their well-being onto the highest political agenda of government.

“The growing presence of women in the Panchayati Raj and local government after the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution has been a positive development. More women in India are also voluntarily exercising their constitutional right to adult suffrage which is a positive and encouraging trend in Indian politics. Scholars term this phenomenon as self-empowerment,” she said.

Ms. Rao said access to the internet would also enable women to transcend the limitations that surround them in their daily lives. It provided them with the opportunity for economic and political advancement.

According to a report issued by the United Nations’ Broadband Commission Working Group, more than 200 million more men had access to the internet than women, particularly in countries where internet access was relatively new and difficult to come by, she said.

“The report says 41 per cent of men worldwide are connected to the internet, compared to 37 per cent of women. In the developing world, the report claims that 16 per cent fewer women use the internet than men, whereas just two per cent fewer women are online in the developed world.”

She said the larger presence of women online could have a drastic economic impact. The World Bank estimates that every 10 per cent increase in access to broadband results in 1.38 per cent growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for developing countries. Bringing women online also enhances their scope for political participation.

Moreover, according to the World Economic Forum, countries where men and women are closer to enjoying equal rights are far more economically competitive than those where the gender gap has left women and girls with limited or no access to medical care, education, elected office and the market place. Similarly, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimated that if women farmers had the same access to seeds, fertilizers and technology as men do, they could reduce the number of undernourished people in the world by 100 million to 150 million, she said.

Church of South India (CSI) deputy moderator Thomas K. Oommen presided over the function. College principal Roy Sam Daniel, vice principal Rachel Mathew, Benjamin Bailey Memorial Lectures convener Mini Chacko also spoke on the occasion.