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ADVERTISEMENT

DECCAN HERALD, MAY 14, 2015

SC bars politicians' pics in govt advts

The Supreme Court on Wednesday barred the usage of photographs of top leaders, except that of the President, prime minister and the chief justice of India, in government advertisements.

The apex court observed: "One government advertisement or the other coinciding with some event or occasion is published practically every day. Photographs, therefore, have the potential of developing personality cult and the image of one or a few individuals which is a direct antithesis of democratic functioning."

Passing directions regulating government advertisements, a bench of Justices Ranjan Gogoi and P C Ghose directed the Centre to appoint a panel comprising three members of "unimpeachable neutrality and impartiality" as ombudsman to oversee the release of advertisements.

The court also told the Central and state governments to maintain the "concepts of fairness and even dispensation to all media/publishing houses" in giving advertisements.

The apex court allowed publication of photographs of the President, prime minister, and the chief justice of India only after taking their approval.

The bench, however, made another exception in case of publicity materials released in commemoration of anniversaries of acknowledged personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, which could carry the photograph of the departed leader.

The directions were passed by the court after analysing the Centre and states' responses to the recommendations made by the three-member panel comprising Prof N R Madhava Menon, former director, National Judicial Academy, T K Viswanathan, former secretary-general, Lok Sabha, and Ranjit Kumar, senior advocate.

The panel was set-up by the apex court in 2014 on PILs filed by NGO Common Cause and others.

The court said that the publication of the photograph of an individual, be a state or party functionary, has the tendency of associating that particular individual with the achievement.

Rejecting the Centre's contention that framing policy was in the executive domain, the bench said it could pass directions under Article 142 of the Constitution when the field was open and uncovered.

“Article 38 and 39 of the Constitution enjoin upon the State a duty to consistently endeavour to achieve social and economic justice to the teeming millions of the country who even today live behind an artificially drawn poverty line. What can be the surer way in the march forward than by ensuring avoidance of unproductive expenditure of public funds,” the bench stated.

The court also said that one single advertisement issued by a Central agency should be enough to commemorate the anniversaries of the few acknowledged and undisputed public figures whose contribution to the national cause cannot raise any dispute or debate.

AGRICULTURE

TELEGRAPH, MAY 12, 2015

Rethinking food security: There should be free movement of agricultural goods
Ashok V. Desai

I have often written about the gigantic corruption programme created by Congress governments, which walks on two legs: the public distribution system and the public works scheme, namely the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee programme. Riddled as they were with enormous leakage, the two could not be discarded by the Congress because they were its primary weapons against the Bharatiya Janata Party's sectarian appeal. It could not even countenance any change in the programmes because it would have deprived corrupt supporters of benefits.

Now, however, the Congress is defeated and the BJP is in power. It has continued both the programmes. Its faith in them seems to be less strong: it has provided only a modest sum for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and raised minimum support prices only a little. There is a chance that it will be less loyal to corruption, and more open to reform. So I would like to report on a study of the PDS published a couple of months ago by Marta Kozicka and her colleagues from the Bonn Center for Development Research. What they have done is to formulate models to work out the effects of the government's wheat and rice policies. But before I turn to their work, it is worth stating some of the basic facts, gathered from the works of Ashok Gulati.

Despite its active, long-standing food policies, India is one of the world's worst performers. Its food supply per capita in 1961-69 was 15 per cent below the world's, and was higher than in China and in Nigeria. In 2001-07, it was 17 per cent below the world's, and both the countries had overtaken India. Its protein supply fell from 82 to 77 per cent of world average.

India's food subsidies, which were 0.4 per cent of gross domestic product in the early 1990s, have settled around 0.8 per cent in recent years. In addition, it gave subsidies on fertilizer, power and irrigation; these together came to 15 per cent of agricultural GDP or 2.7 per cent of total GDP in 2009-10. It also restricted foreign agricultural trade, and so prevented Indian farmers from dominating the world rice market even though prices in India were much lower than those abroad. If foodgrain controls were dismantled, India could refashion its agriculture and emerge as a major agricultural exporter.

Government procurement takes an important share of production, but not a dominating one. Of the 90-odd million tons of wheat, the Food Corporation of India buys roughly 30 million tons. Of the rest, farmers keep roughly 25 million tons for themselves, and sell the rest in the market. So at least as much wheat goes into the open market as passes through the FCI. Of the 110-odd million tons of rice, farmers keep about 30 million tons, and the FCI takes about 25 million tons. So about a half of the output is sold by farmers

to the market - a much higher share than in the case of wheat. Although the FCI takes about a third of wheat output and a quarter of rice output, the price elasticity of both with respect to the procurement price is high, presumably because the farmers can be sure of getting the minimum support price and are therefore sensitive to it. That may make a government unpopular if it dismantles the system; but there is still a case for reforming it.

If the MSP rises relatively to the wholesale price in the market, a 1 per cent rise in the ratio of the prices would increase procurement of wheat by 0.39 per cent and of rice by 0.27 per cent. (These are not own price elasticities; they have been estimated by Gulati and Sharma at 1.37 per cent for wheat and 1.1 per cent for rice.)

The government raised issue prices to below-poverty-line, above-poverty-line and other entitled families much less than general prices; as a result, the real issue prices fell by a half or more between 2001-02 and 2013-14.

Of rural households' grain consumption, they grew 25 per cent of the rice and 37 per cent of the wheat; the rest was bought in the market. This gives us an idea of the decline in subsistence farming, and serves as a check on the figures of output disposition I gave earlier.

Rice production has exceeded domestic consumption for long; that has forced the government to export or allow exports. It became more liberal towards exports from 1995-96 onwards; consequently, 2-3 million tons were exported annually, but faced difficulty because procurement policy kept domestic prices above export prices. This changed in 2007-08, when international prices shot up and exports became profitable. Then both government and private exports of rice increased; in 2012-13 they reached 10 million tons. Wheat shows the same pattern, though the volume of exports is smaller. In both, the government maintains a general ban on exports and relaxes it when stocks bulge too much. That is a poor way of managing exports if one wants to get a good price or build up a stable market. However, basmati production rose from 1995-96 onwards in response to the lucrative European market. It is less subject to policy interference, and 8-10 million tons are exported every year.

The government grain operations are expensive; Vijay Paul Sharma of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad has quantified them for rice. The economic cost of wheat to FCI was Rs 2418 a quintal - almost twice the procurement cost of Rs 1250; for rice, the extras were much less - Rs 537 on procurement cost of Rs 1285. Of these extras, 44 per cent went to buy gunny bags, and 25 per cent was paid to *mandis*; 15 per cent went into sales and purchase taxes, 10 per cent to transport, and 4.3 per cent was paid to workers to load and unload the bags in *mandis*. We do not have a similar breakup for wheat. But its extra costs are much higher; presumably, the government and *mandis* of Punjab make a lot of money out of wheat. One indicator of the differing levels of corruption is storage loss, which is 2 per cent for rice and 10 per cent for wheat. Governments and *mandis* are local, State-enforced monopolies which make food a lot more costly for our poor.

To sum up, the entire world has mechanized grain handling. India has not because it compels traders to pack grains in gunny bags. This inefficient handling adds considerably to our cost of grains. Second, we have statutorily given local monopoly in agricultural products to *mandis*, which they use to make huge profits. It is time to introduce free trade within the country and abolish these monopolies. Finally, our state governments and municipalities make a lot of money out of grain traders. The Finance Commission keeps raising their share of Central revenue without ever asking for better behaviour. The least it should insist on is abolition of all taxes that restrict the free movement of agricultural goods across the country. The prime minister has often promised new reforms. Here is a place where he can start: he should persuade the state governments to integrate the country. If he does it, he will be remembered for long as a reformer.

CHILD LABOUR

BUSINESS LINE, MAY 14, 2015

Child labour law change to allow under-14s to work in family enterprises, entertainment sector

But ban remains in all other sectors

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal to allow children under 14 years of age to work in non-hazardous family enterprises and the entertainment industry, except circus, with certain conditions. Child labour in all other sectors will be completely banned.

The Cabinet said there was a need to strike “a balance between the need for education for a child and the reality of the socio-economic conditions”.

It said “in a large number of families, children help their parents in their occupations like agriculture, artisanship etc. and while helping the parents, children also learn the basics of occupations.”

Approving official amendments to the Child Labour Amendment Bill, 2012, the Cabinet also decided that children between 14 and 18 years should not be allowed to work in hazardous industries. As per the original law, employing children under 14 years was banned in only 18 hazardous industries.

Stricter punishment

The changes also provide for stricter punishment for employers up to Rs. 50,000 and imprisonment up to three years for repeat offences. While there is no penalty for parents for the first offence, for repeat offences they may be penalised with up to Rs. 10,000 fine.

Also, a new definition of adolescent has been introduced in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act and employment of adolescents (14 to 18 years of age) has been prohibited in hazardous occupations and processes.

The official amendments to the Bill will now be tabled in Parliament.

As per official data, there has been an over 60 per cent decline in child labour (age 5-14) from 12.6 million in 2001 to 4.9 million in 2010. The five States that have the highest child labour are Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Bihar. Child rights activists, however, have questioned the extent of decline, saying that the data does not reflect the ground reality, as many children are employed in “invisible” work.

According to a 2013 report by the International Labour Organisation, globally about 10.5 million children – over 71 per cent girls – work as domestic workers alone.

CIVIL SERVICE

TRIBUNE, MAY 13, 2015

Aadhaar system to monitor UT employees' attendance

Bringing in new accountability and transparency in the functioning of government offices from tomorrow, UT employees will mark their attendance through the Aadhaar Attendance Management System.

Over 100 such devices have been installed in UT offices. Based on the Aadhaar system, that is GPRS and WiFi enabled, the new system logs the entry and exit time of the employees and tracks chronic latecomers. Around 5,500 employees will be covered under the project and around 500 such machines will be installed.

Initially, the employees posted at the UT Secretariat, Sector 9, and the Estate Office, Sector 17, will mark their attendance through the smart device that authenticates an employee's identity on the basis of the picture taken and matches it with the unique identity number of the employee.

“If any employee of the Estate Office has gone to the UT Secretariat on duty, he can mark his attendance there. It will automatically get stored in central data. Such devices are being installed in the offices of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, Chandigarh Housing Board, CITCO, and government hospitals in Sectors 16 and 32,” said an official.

Officials in the Department of Information and Technology, who are overseeing the project, said the system enabled heads of departments (HODs) to access the real-time data on employees' attendance while sitting in their offices. All employees, barring the HODs, will have to mark their attendance on the new system.

“The system facilitates search, down to the names of individual employees, and all data can be downloaded. The public reporting of data creates pressure on supervisors to ensure compliance. The moment the attendance is marked, a message comes on the registered mobile number,” said an official.

The new system will replace the earlier installed biometric attendance system.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAY 11, 2015

Govt unlikely to roll back UPSC aptitude test

Aloke Tikku

The government is unlikely to roll back the aptitude test — introduced in 2011 — from the civil services preliminary examination and would stick to the 2014 format that kept English comprehension out of the first stage of the three-phased exam.

Faced with protests on the streets and disruption in Parliament in 2014, the Modi government had promised to review the changes carried out in the format of the exam, conducted to pick India's top police, civil and foreign services officers, by the Congress-led UPA ruling combine in 2011.

But the government is coming around to the view that tinkering with the examination process would not just be counter-productive but also unfair to hundreds of thousands of aspirants.

Late in April, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which conducts the three-stage recruitment process, also told a parliamentary standing committee that the government was expected to maintain status quo on the examination.

“The committee did not make any recommendations to the UPSC on this issue since it was indicated that status quo was being maintained,” EM Sudarsana Natchiappan, who heads the panel, said.

The Natchiappan committee — which had asked the UPSC to introduce the reforms several years back — only advised the commission on reducing the time that it takes to complete the process, which goes on for more than a year. The commission was also asked to explore moving the exam online.

Till 2010, the preliminary objective-style screening test comprised two papers. The first was a general studies paper and the second, an optional subject, selected by the candidate from a list of 23.

From 2011, the second paper was replaced by a second general studies paper that tests the aptitude and assess candidates' understanding rather than memory. This paper is commonly referred to as the civil services aptitude test, or CSAT paper.

There were widespread protests with claims that that the test was biased in favour of technical and management students and urban candidates.

A government official said there were no fresh concessions for civil service aspirants who, if selected, would be serving the government till around 2050.

Already, the government has pledged to give aspirants, who may have lost out due to changes in the exam pattern, two additional attempts. Also, the English comprehension portion removed from the CSAT paper would not be back.

Nearly 940,000 candidates applied for the examination in 2014. A little less than half of them, 450,000, sat the preliminary exam. This time, the UPSC expects at least a million applications and has increased the number of exam centres from 2,137 to about 3,000.

The formal order spelling out the examination rules is expected on May 16. The first-stage preliminary examination is to be held on August 23, the exhaustive second-stage main exam is in December. The final interviews will be in conducted in April/May 2016.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAY 11, 2015

Babus subletting official quarters may lose their jobs

Moushumi Das Gupta

Government officials found subletting their official accommodation will, now, not only have to shell out a hefty penalty but may also stand to lose their job.

With complaints galore of central government employees letting out their official residences without authorization, the Union urban development ministry has decided to crack the whip and make penalties much more severe in the Allotment of Government Residences (General Pool in Delhi) Rules 1963.

In the amended rules if an official is found subletting not only would the allotment be cancelled and the official debarred from future allotment but the Directorate of Estates (DoE), under the UD ministry, will also issue direction and send a draft chargesheet to the administrative office concerned of the allottee for initiating departmental proceedings.

The office of the allottee would have to inform the DoE about the details of the charges framed and penalty imposed on the official.

Under the existing rules, the DoE used to just inform the administrative office of the allottee of the violation and left it to them to take action.

More often than not, either no action was taken or the official was let off lightly after minor punishment like cancellation of allotment.

Also, now DoE will charge hefty damage fees and recover two times of damages from the allottee from the date of inspection if the allotted house has been found sublet.

Also, the new rules will allow an allottee to share the residence or any of the out-houses, garages only with his family and immediate relations.

The old rules allowed officers to share their residence with other central government employees eligible for general pool accommodation.

Between 2011, 2012 and 2013, the ministry has received 4075 complaints from across India of officers subletting their government accommodation.

Of this action was taken only in 1402 cases.

Delhi topped the list where maximum 3583 complaint were received followed by Mumbai (260) and Faridabad (132).

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAY 10, 2015

It's all work, no holiday for babus in Modi govt

Since the workaholic Prime Minister came to power a year ago, key bureaucrats and some ministers have started putting in extra hours and sacrificing their weekends in a bid to keep up with their “top boss”. (AP File Photo/Manish Swarup)

Foreign secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has installed an unlikely piece of furniture in one corner of his office in Delhi’s stately South Block: a divan.

It’s not an indulgence, or a vanity. The divan doubles up as a bed when Jaishankar has to catch some shuteye, because his schedule sometimes doesn’t allow him to go home: the country’s top foreign service officer has to be on tap for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and this means late nights at work, as well as Sundays.

Welcome to life in the Modi administration. Since the workaholic Prime Minister came to power a year ago, key bureaucrats and some ministers have started putting in extra hours and sacrificing their weekends in a bid to keep up with their “top boss”.

Modi, who sleeps only four to five hours a day, doesn't go slow on weekends. “He keeps mostly political engagements on Sundays. Official meetings also take place, as and when necessary,” said a PMO source.

With Modi in the office, his core team, too, works during the entire weekend. “Officers of the rank of director and above in the PMO remain available to work on Sundays. The PM's principal secretary Nripendra Mishra, additional principal secretary PK Mishra and public relations officer of the PMO Jagdish Thakkar have not had a single Sunday off since they joined the highest executive office,” added another source.

Railway minister Suresh Prabhu comes to office on some Sundays and keeps official engagements even on non-working days. On some Sundays, the chairman and other members of the railway board are asked to attend office. The new culture of being always switched on is yet to hit all sections of the government.

Parliamentary affairs and urban development minister Venkaiah Naidu, defence minister Manohar Parrikar and defence secretary RK Mathur usually do not work on Sundays. Top human resource development ministry officials, too, prefer to enjoy a weekend break.

Jaishankar's superior, foreign minister Sushma Swaraj, prefers to remain behind the scenes and away from the glare of media, but she's taken to the new way of working effortlessly.

“On addressing consular issues, she is 24/7. Indian missions can get instructions anytime from her, including on Sundays, to help an Indian in distress,” said an official.

And her ministry's new spokesperson, Vikas Swarup, has been thrown in at the deep end. Just before taking over, he travelled to Turkmenistan with Swaraj. He didn't go home from the airport when he landed in Delhi; instead, he went with Modi on his trip to Germany, France and Canada. Once back from the trip, he started his new job and then he was off to Indonesia. On his return from that trip, he was driven straight back to South Block for a Nepal crisis management group meeting.

COMPUTERS

PIONEER, MAY 13, 2015

GOOGLE'S 1ST CAMPUS OUTSIDE US IN HYD

Hyderabad has added yet another feather to its cap as the Telangana Government on Tuesday inked an MoU with IT major Google Inc to set up a `1,000 crore campus in the city.

The MOU was signed between Telangana Secretary of IT Jayesh Ranjan and Google's global head of facilities and workplace David Redcliffe in Google headquarters at Mountain View in USA. Visiting Minister for IT K Taraka Rama Rao was also present.

Rao, who is on a two-week tour to USA to woo investors and companies, went around the Google headquarters and held discussions with top honchos of the company.

The Hyderabad campus — second-biggest in the world and the first in Asia — is expected to be ready within four years and will have two million square feet working space. Around 13,000 technologists would be recruited over a period of four years for this project.

The Telangana Government will allocate seven acres of land in Gachibowli, bustling IT hub of Hyderabad, for the prestigious campus and the work on the project is expected to formally start next year.

In another boost to Hyderabad's IT growth plan, Google has also agreed to consider the request of the State Government to include Hyderabad in its Street View project after the Union Government grants its approval. Street View is a tool in Google Map enabling the users to have a panoramic 360 degrees view of streets, roads and monuments.

The company would first complete the project in Hyderabad before expanding to other places across Asia.

The decision was taken in a meeting of Telangana team with Manik Gupta, Director Street View Project.

DISASTERS

HINDU, MAY 15, 2015

Nepal quake and the Gorkha bond

Ashok K. Mehta

“*A aju mo to Nepal Janchhu*” (today I will go to Nepal) is a vintage song I first heard in 1959 at Barpak, now the epicentre of the killer earthquake that struck Nepal on April 25, 2015. In the lyric, Nepal refers to Kathmandu, the be-all and end-all of life for the village Gorkhas; as in ancient times, it still represents the exalted centre, the periphery not counting. Let me elaborate.

Following the earthquake, world attention, for the first four days, was riveted on Kathmandu, which reflected the political and constitutional lacunae that still disconnects the rural hinterland from the metropolis. Ironically, the exodus of survivors, from Kathmandu back to the mountain villages has begun because up there, “*pani, hava aru khaja ramro chha*”, which means water, air and grain are healthy. Had India’s National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, not flown to flattened Barpak, he would never have heard about the famed Victoria Cross winner, Gaje Ghale. (Captain Gaje Ghale, who died, aged 81, in New Delhi in 2000, was awarded a Victoria Cross, as a Havildar (sergeant) while leading a platoon of young soldiers of the 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles in Burma in May 1943.) For the Indian Army, specifically, it means much more as hundreds upon thousands of Ghales, Gurungs, Thapas and Ranas from this region regularly join its ranks with cheer. Just last month, two of India’s 38 Gorkha battalions celebrated 200 years of kinship with India having made the ultimate sacrifice for the defence of the realm.

Deep distress

According to initial quake damage assessment by the UN Humanitarian mission and UN World Food Programme reports, 30 out of the 75 districts in Nepal have been greatly affected, 14 of them acutely. Out of four million people, one million of them are likely to have been displaced and 1.5 million will require urgent food assistance. Gorkha, Dhading, Lamjung, Sindhupalchowk and parts of Bharatpur, Patan and Kathmandu have been razed to the ground. Rescue and relief efforts have been undermined due to severe damage to the infrastructure and the few all-weather roads. There is also the factor of the absence of youth which has left the old, women and children languishing, especially in the rural areas. Here is why. In 2014, 1,500 Nepalis left each day seeking jobs abroad, a meteoric jump from just six persons each day, in 1996. Remittances from tourism, the second largest earner of wealth for Nepal, is bound to come to a grinding halt. The fact is that half-a-million hands drive tourism for nearly 8,00,000 tourists; in 2013, this generated \$0.42 billion or Rs.39.1 billion in revenue.

When India reached out

Let's look at how India stepped in following the quake. Displaying extraordinary strategic foresight with its 'Operation Maitri', India became the first country to respond to Nepal's distressed state. India's first C130J 'Super Hercules' with National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel brought rescue and relief material to Nepal in less than six hours. In addition, the C-17 Globemaster III, IL-76 and civilian aircraft along with Mi-17 and Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Dhruv helicopters were also used to supplement the exercise. AN-32 aircraft and Cheetah helicopters were on standby in Gorakhpur. Maj.Gen. J.S. Sandhu, a Gorkha Rifles officer, earlier posted in the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, was appointed the overall task force commander while another Gorkha Rifles officer, Brig. J. Gamlin, was deployed at Pokhara to lead the subsidiary task force to reach out to the rural areas.

The Chief of the Indian Army, Gen Dalbir Singh Suhag, who is a Gorkha officer, personally directed operations. Mobile medical teams, mobile and field hospitals and engineering task forces were brought in by air; in addition, numerous trekking teams carting relief to inaccessible villages set out quickly. 'Operation Maitri' has been the most elaborate out-of-area humanitarian venture launched by our armed forces. The aircraft mentioned earlier, evacuated stranded tourists and the Indian work force in Nepal. Some 600,000 Indians are living and working across Nepal; India is also the source of the largest group of money-spending tourists in Nepal. Similarly, due to the unique open border and the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, there is always a five to seven million strong Nepali floating population in India.

The Chinese defence spokesman, Geng Yansheng, was even asked at a briefing in Beijing why the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force did not use its aircraft to airlift stranded Chinese tourists and others such as the 8,000-strong work force working on Chinese-funded projects there when India had done so to ferry out its nationals and more than 200 foreigners from 15 countries. The Chinese media have reported the visible outpacing by India of Beijing's rescue and relief efforts. The Chinese Foreign Ministry played down reports of a competition with India to assist quake-hit Nepal and the Ambassadors in Kathmandu and New Delhi dismissed such speculation and instead recommended joint operations and working "positively". The only jarring note in all this was when some sections of the Nepali media complained that India had forced its way into many quake-affected parts without Nepal's sanction. At this point, I would like to recollect how in the 1990s, when there were two civilian passenger airline crashes in Nepal, unknown to the media, Nepal's Prime Minister G.P. Koirala sought help from India to locate the bodies of the passengers. In contrast to this, one had "India invades Nepal" as banner headlines in Kathmandu-based newspapers when there were sorties by Indian Air Force helicopters scouring the Kathmandu valley to locate quake victims.

The Army link

China has come to realise and accept India's comparative and operational advantages in Nepal: the physical proximity, a familiarity with the terrain, the language, historical, social, ethnic, cultural and religious linkages. What is less known is the military connection. This predates the British when Gorkhas joined Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Punjab Army at Lahore, giving the soldiers back home the appellation "Lahure" which endures till this day. The Nepal Army has been trained and equipped by India since 1952 with Indian Army signallers helping out in the first 1959 multiparty elections and even briefly manning joint check posts on the Northern border. Even today, Nepal receives the largest number of training slots in Indian military institutions. A Bilateral Consultative Group on Security Issues was established in 2003.

The Army Chiefs of both two countries are honorary Generals in each other's armies. Why India was able to respond with alacrity was due to the fact that in early 2014, Nepal Army Chief, Gen. Gaurav Rana organised a disaster management conference in Kathmandu to which he invited former Indian Army Chief, Gen. Bikram Singh, to be the keynote speaker. But one needs to consider this response. In an interview to an Indian TV channel, Gen. Rana said: "India's contribution was tremendous and outstanding, government-to-government relations superb and the bonhomie between the two armies, special and unparalleled with stray criticism about Big Brother India being inconsequential". The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has the biggest military mission anywhere, including Pension and Welfare Wings located in areas where there is Gorkha recruitment to the Indian Army and where there also is a concentration of ex-servicemen; 26 'District Soldier Boards' reach out to inaccessible areas where the permanent establishment at Pokhara and Dharan cannot. This elaborate outreach ensures that a Bharatiya Sena Lahure or Bhu Pu (Indian soldier or ex-serviceman) is present across Nepal. Thus 39,000 serving soldiers, 150,000 ex-servicemen, thousands of Army aspirants and the impressive economic assistance all make for a pro-India constituency which is often able to subdue the politically motivated anti-India sentiment.

The lessons

Maoist leaders, led by former Nepal Prime Minister Prachanda, have raised the usual security concerns about Indian Army's relief work. Similarly, the online outrage on social media over the Indian media's "overzealous and insensitive reporting of relief work", has touched a raw nerve. India's spontaneous and overwhelming response has been misconstrued in some quarters as undermining Nepal's sovereignty. "There is no need to suspect the role of India as their personnel are accompanied by the Nepal Army," said Gen. Rana.

Obviously, no country in the region would have been able to cope with a catastrophe of such magnitude as the quake has showed. While it is early days yet, some lessons are apparent: inadequate political direction and control; a lack of civil-military coordination; the delayed establishment of a nodal agency to control foreign assistance; inadequate

disaster awareness, the lack of means to counter rumour, panic and fear; and the disparity of attention between the centre and the periphery. However, what stood out amid the quake ruin and distress was the failure of the SAARC in formulating a regional response and its inability to operationalise the SAARC Food Security Bank sanctioned in the 1980s.

The new Nepal constitution must decentralise power and resources. The fact that no local body elections have been held since 1999 will immensely hurt rehabilitation, relief and reconstruction efforts.

The rescue phase ended after nine days — mainly relief and the removal of rubble. There are still aftershocks some as much as 7.4 on the Richter scale, and reports of casualties. Mr. Doval told Mr. Koirala that India will provide whatever it takes to put Nepal back on its feet. By being a step ahead of others in its response, India has turned the Himalayan tragedy into a strategic opportunity.

(Gen Mehta is from Fifth Gorkha Rifles and has trekked extensively in Nepal since 1959.)

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAY 11, 2015

China's next transformation

Andrew Sheng

During three decades of favourable global economic conditions, China created an integrated global production system unprecedented in scale and complexity. But now its policymakers must deal with the triple challenges of the unfolding European debt crisis, slow recovery in the United States, and a secular growth slowdown in China's economy. All three challenges are interconnected, and mistakes by any of the parties could plunge the global economy into another recession. To assess the risks and options for China and the world, one must understand China's "Made in the World" production system, which rests on four distinct but mutually dependent pillars.

The first of these pillars, the China-based "world factory," was largely created by foreign multinational corporations and their associated suppliers and subcontractors, with labourintensive processing and assembly carried out by small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) that have direct access to global markets through a complex web of contracts. Starting modestly in coastal areas and special economic zones, the "world factory" supply chain has spread throughout China, producing everything from stuffed animals to iPads.

The "world factory" could not have been built without the second pillar: the "China infrastructure network," installed and operated mostly by vertically integrated state-owned enterprises in logistics, energy, roads, telecoms, shipping, and ports. This pillar relies heavily on planning, large-scale fixed investment, and administrative controls, and its quality, scale, and relative efficiency were strategic to Chinese competitiveness and productivity.

The third pillar is the "Chinese financial supply chain," which provided the financing needed to construct and maintain the infrastructure network. This supply chain is characterised by the dominance of state-owned banks, high domestic savings, relatively underdeveloped financial markets, and a closed capital account.

The final pillar is the "government services supply chain," by which central and local officials affect every link of production, logistics, and financial networks through regulations, taxes, or permits. Most foreign observers miss the scale and depth of institutional and process innovation in this supply chain, which has managed (mostly) to

protect property rights, reduce transaction costs, and minimize risks by aligning government services with market interests. For example, Chinese local governments became highly adept at attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) by providing attractive infrastructure and supporting services that facilitate the expansion of global production chains. With the onset of the current global crisis, and given dramatic changes in social media, demographics, urbanisation, and resource constraints, all four pillars are now under stress. Production chains are facing labour shortages, wage increases, and threats of relocation to lower-cost countries. Meanwhile, global investors are questioning local governments' solvency.

Chinese experts are now debating a key governance question: which top-level architecture would enable the country to adopt the reforms needed to meet global and domestic pressures? Investors are concerned about Chinese equities' erratic performance, regulatory risks, and policy surprises, as well as the uncertainties stemming from greater volatility in asset prices, including property prices, interest rates, and the exchange rate.

What makes the Chinese economy more difficult to read is the increasingly complex interaction of all four of its production system's components, with each other and the rest of the world.

First, favourable conditions for the growth of the "world factory" have begun to dissipate. Production costs – in terms of labour, resources, regulation, and infrastructure – have been rising domestically, while consumption bubbles in the West have burst.

Second, the early success of "China infrastructure" was built on cheap land, capital, and labour. But, despite modern infrastructure, logistical costs within China are 18% of production costs, compared with 10% in the US, owing to various internal inefficiencies. Third, the success of China's financial system was built on state-owned banks' financing of large infrastructure projects and foreign financing of export production through FDI and trade. The financial system has yet to address adequately the challenges of financial inclusivity, particularly funding of SMEs and rural areas, and exposure to excess capacity in selected industries.

Last but not least, the three pillars could not have remained standing without the anchor provided by the fourth. Until now, its success was based on positive competition between local governments and different ministries, benchmarked according to performance indicators such as GDP and fiscal revenues. Unfortunately, this has led to problems of

social equity and environmental sustainability, which require complex coordination of bureaucratic silos in order to overcome the resistance of powerful vested interests.

There is general recognition and consensus that the path of reform requires profound reengineering of all four pillars. First, the production chain must shift from export dependence toward domestic consumption. Realigning China's infrastructure means emphasising quality over quantity, and reducing state ownership and controlled prices in favour of market forces. State orchestration should instead be focused on fighting corruption, reducing transaction costs, promoting competition, lowering entry barriers, and removing excess capacity.

For the financial supply chain, the key is to address systemic risks and realign incentives in order to induce investors to support the engines of real economic growth, rather than the creation of asset bubbles.

The Chinese miracle was engineered by institutional and process innovation at all levels of the government services supply chain. China requires nothing less than another radical reengineering to become a more balanced, socially equitable, and sustainable economy. That process has already begun with another round of experimentation through three new Special Economic Zones in Hengqin, Qianhai, and Nansha to pilot the emergence of a creative, knowledge-based services economy.

Of course, such an economy relies crucially on the quality of governance. The real challenge for Chinese officials is how to balance creativity and institutional innovation with order, thereby ensuring the integrity of all four of its economy's pillars.

The writer, a former central banker is a fellow At Fung Global Institute. Special To Asia News Network.

EDUCATION

HINDU, MAY 13, 2015

DU urges UGC to reconsider ban on animal dissection

Delhi University has urged the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Environment Ministry to reconsider their decision of a ban on animal dissection, saying it is reducing zoology into a “dead discipline”.

The university’s Department of Zoology has written a letter to the UGC to limit the ban to the endangered species. “Students are just reading theory and are unable to do any practical experiments,” Neeta Sehgal, HoD, said in the letter.

In 2011, the UGC had imposed a partial ban on animal dissection and directed all universities and colleges to stop experiments on animals for training purposes for zoology and life sciences at the undergraduate level.

However, last year, the UGC had instructed all universities to ban dissection of animals for academic purposes at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

“No animal from any species shall be dissected, either by teachers or students for any purpose,” the UGC notification had said. The UGC had said that non-animal methods, including computer simulations, interactive CD-ROMs, films and lifelike models could be used to teach anatomy and complex biological processes. Institutions found violating the order can now be booked under the Wildlife Protection Act and also the Prevention of Cruelty Against Animals Act.

“Anatomy cannot be taught merely by doing simulations on computers. If the students do not know the odour of an animal when it is dissected, how are they going to deal with it medically and continue with the process? Without practical training if they perform some surgery, they might be shaky. Technology cannot be a substitute for cutting through tissues to feel the texture of the viscera,” Ms. Sehgal said.

“The department is breeding its own animals. Then why can’t they be used for dissection purpose? How else will students learn about the anatomy of an animal?” asked Mamta, a student of M.Sc. .

TELEGRAPH, MAY 14, 2015

Presidency's dilemma: A little history of admission tests Dipankar Dasgupta

Intriguing things are happening in Presidency University once again. Students laid a night-long siege, demanding from the vice chancellor and other officials a uniform procedure across all disciplines for entry into the university. Having grown up in a world

where infants barely out of their cradles are subjected to admission tests, their demand can hardly be described as unnatural. In fact, the very removal of an admission test itself may appear to them as a denial of a fundamental right. On the other hand, the right to "deny" clearly rests with the authorities in charge of running the institution. And the authorities do not appear too excited about the idea of admission tests. Nothing unnatural in this either. The institution lacks the necessary infrastructure as well as internal faculty strength to carry out the exercise.

As far as the scarcity of examination halls is concerned, the matter may presumably be attended to by renting in premises for the purpose. This procedure is not unknown, since it is a policy that many other reputable institutions follow. The faculty shortage difficulty is less easily addressed, especially since the university aspires to represent the quintessence of academic attainment. Academically outstanding people are usually not available on lease to evaluate admission-test answer scripts. Committed academics, with proven excellence, need to be located instead and shifted to the university as permanent employees. The university has succeeded to an extent in attracting such talent, though not fully so. Several faculty positions still need to be filled up and the VC cannot be held responsible for not being able to fulfil an impossible dream.

If media information is to be relied upon, the administration is engaged in discussions with the student body to find out possible ways of escaping the impasse. While that process is on, it is not entirely irrelevant to reflect upon the history of admission tests in the erstwhile Presidency College.

Prior to the mid-Seventies, the college did not conduct admission tests in a majority of departments. In particular, the science faculties depended solely on the "cut-off mark" criterion to determine the quality of students. At the same time, there were departments - such as economics, English and history - that did conduct admission tests. In this columnist's perception, they did so primarily to judge the applicants' command over the English language. Indeed, he was himself asked to write an essay on a subject quite unrelated to economics to prove his worthiness to being admitted to the economics department. It was a weighted average of the marks obtained in the admission test and the immediately preceding university or board examination that determined a candidate's eligibility.

However, as noted earlier, most departments, including physics and geology that housed the cream of the student body, felt no need to arrange for admission tests. And neither students nor the faculty ever complained of any massive damage caused on that account. The college resorted to conducting admission tests for a majority of departments (possibly all of them) around the second half of the Seventies. As far as a teacher from that era can recall, the practice began in the year 1976 - that is, at the fag end of the Siddhartha Sankar Ray government and a year preceding the Left Front capturing the Writers' Buildings. Thus, the Left Front, even though it has been accused of making a fetish of mediocrity during its tenure, was yet to take charge of the devastation of education in the state.

The state, however, was passing through a period of instability in the mid-Seventies and the Ray government will go down in history for precipitating a holocaust on teenagers of the time. How education suffered in those days is a matter of speculation perhaps, though many feel that the manner in which board as well as university examinations were run during the troubled times had little to recommend for itself. It is tempting to extrapolate from this observation that the college in its entirety began to question the merit of relying on the marks secured in higher secondary or similar examinations alone to judge the quality of entering students.

It is possible, therefore, that the college authorities decided, and decided rightly, to initiate admission tests in most departments, to ensure internally as well as externally the quality of the students being admitted. And this practice has continued ever since. In the meantime, with a stable government in place, the lawlessness surrounding board examinations was gradually brought under control, but this did not impact the authorities' Presidency College to conduct admission tests. There were two reasons it would seem why the college did not feel over-constrained to carry out the task. First, it had not yet graduated to a university and second, there was no shortage of faculty. The size of the institution was, therefore, substantially small and the size of the faculty adequately large. Consequently, there were few difficulties surrounding the handling of admission tests.

A pertinent question might nonetheless be raised in this connection. If indeed the school leaving or other examinations had turned into a peaceful affair, why did Presidency College not revert to the earlier cut-off point system in the science departments at least. And the answer probably lies in the Left Front government's morbid decision to view academic excellence as a form of exploitation by the so-called elite class. Means were devised to remove the potential sharpness of examination questions to distinguish the bright from the non-bright. These devious machinations engendered the all-too-familiar tutorial homes that not only substituted for classroom instruction, but even made the latter irrelevant.

A solid drilling in tutorial homes was a *sine qua non* for students to perform with so-called brilliance, though the brilliant performers were practically indistinguishable from one another, a phenomenon reminiscent of a scene from Satyajit Ray's *Parash Pathar*, where each participant in a dance show was awarded a gold medal. Unfortunately, a similar flattening out process was underway among the ranks of the faculty at the college too. It is a wild guess perhaps that the college perceived that higher secondary marks secured by a candidate seeking entrance into it were not adequate indicators of quality and, hence, an admission test was in order. Alternatively, the continuation of admission tests even after social violence was well under control could be an indicator of bureaucratic inertia induced largely by an unimaginative faculty.

In any case, given the mediocrity of average faculty members (though not all of them), one wonders how promising candidates were picked out of the flock of tutorial-home-trained indistinguishable students. One suspects that admission tests were not serving any purpose at all. This does not mean that the college did not have its pool of competent

students. It was a case of serendipity perhaps that ensured that a reasonably large number of meritorious students continued to graduate out of the college.

Whatever the true state of affairs might have been, there is little doubt that conducting admission tests for the much larger Presidency University now is a Herculean task. Whoever might be advocating that cause needs to realize that admission tests for all the departments cannot possibly accomplish the purpose for which the tests are designed. Till such time that infrastructure issues, and this includes faculty recruitment as well, are resolved, there will be no way of judging if an admission test supplementing a cut-off criterion will be more potent than the cut off alone.

Of course, tutorial homes still thrive merrily. Hence, a simple cut-off score may not solve problems either. Moreover, the issues motivating the students' admission tests agitation continue to remain a grey area. All these confusions notwithstanding, Presidency University needs to view as well as project itself as a centre for super-excellence.

And therein, alas, lies the rub.

The author is former professor of economics, Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta

ELECTIONS

ASIAN AGE, MAY 14, 2015

Achal Kumar Jyoti is new election commissioner

Achal Kumar Jyoti assumes charge as the Election Commissioner in New Delhi on Wednesday.

A 1975-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Achal Kumar Jyoti, who served as chief secretary of Gujarat during Narendra Modi's tenure as chief minister, on Wednesday took over as the new election commissioner.

"Jyoti took charge today at the Election Commission of India, filling one of the two vacancies in the three-member body," a senior official said. The government is soon expected to appoint one more election commissioner to fill up the last vacancy.

Mr Jyoti is a 1975-batch IAS officer who retired as state Gujarat chief secretary in January 2013. He served in the top post in Gujarat when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the chief minister.

Mr Jyoti (62) had also served as the state vigilance commissioner and worked in various capacities in his cadre, including as chairman of the Kandla Port Trust between 1999 and 2004 and managing director of the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL). Mr Jyoti has also worked as secretary in the industry, revenue and water supply departments.

Born on January 23, 1953, Mr Jyoti will have a tenure of nearly three years as ECs demit office at the age of 65. An EC or a CEC has a tenure of six years in office or till he or she attains the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

After V.S. Sampath demitted office in January, H.S. Brahma was elevated as CEC. But after Mr Brahma demitted office, two posts of ECs in the three-member body have remained vacant. Between April 19, when Nasim Zaidi took over as the CEC till today, he was the only member in the poll body.

FEDERALISM

ECONOMIC TIMES, MAY 11, 2015

Centre, states should work as 'Team India': PM Modi

Vowing to work with the states to "take India forward", the PM said it has been a "misfortune" that in the past there have been tensions between states and the Centre.

BURNPUR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi today made a vigorous pitch for the [Centre](#) and [states](#) to work together as 'Team India' to take the country forward, a view endorsed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

And in comforting words to the fiery Trinamool Congress chief, Modi expressed confidence that West Bengal, whose progress, he said, had earlier determined the country's economic development, would surely bounce back in the coming days and become an "important economic power".

Vowing to work with the states to "take India forward", the Prime Minister said it has been a "misfortune" that in the past there have been tensions between states and the Centre.

"I too have been a Chief Minister for many years and I know that this attitude (of the Centre) towards states will not help anyone. Our Constitution has given us a federal structure. But unfortunately Centre-state relations have always come under stress", he said after the inauguration of modernised IISCO Steel Plant here in the presence of Banerjee.

Asserting that PM and CMs would act as a team which would take India forward, he said, "Delhi alone will not rule India as has happened for 60 years. Delhi will not be the only pillar on which the country will stand, but it will be supported by 30 pillars (of states)" and cited the creation of Niti Aayog which has all states as partners.

Citing the recent Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh, Modi said it was the perfect example of the success of "Team India".

"We are proud that the states of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura had worked with Delhi in addressing the vexed issue which had remained unsolved for the past 41 years since the time of Mujibur Rahman.

"If there is [Team India](#), we can solve problems of international issues and internal ones very easily," he said.

Turning to West Bengal, the Prime Minister said his government's effort was to make eastern India powerful. "For this, West Bengal needs to be strengthened first."

"Earlier, the economic development of India was decided by the progress made in

Bengal... Bengal will have to climb the ladder of development in the interest of the nation," said Modi.

"Bengal will surely bounce back in the coming days and become an important economic power," he hoped, adding "if Bengal and Kolkata cannot become strong, then no part of the country can become strong". "To take India forward, this land of Bengal will come to the country's help".

The Prime Minister said that political differences would remain, but it should not come in the way of country's development.

Earlier, Banerjee said, "If we can work together, the country moves ahead. When we divide, the country is doomed. We don't want division among people. Politics will be there and development will also be there.

The federal and central structure will be there and we will work together within the ambit of the Constitution".

Modi also took a dig at the previous UPA regime, saying the media was full of reports of "scams" of all kinds in that period.

"Now, the reports are not about coal scam but about coal auction," he quipped, adding there had been no report of any scam even as his government got ready to complete one year in office this month.

GOVERNORS

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAY 13, 2015

Four states get new governors, two shifted

The Narendra Modi government on Tuesday filled up four long-pending vacancies in Raj Bhavans across the country and shifted the governors of Jharkhand and Arunachal Pradesh but stopped short of taking a call on five others states including poll-bound Bihar.

Former West Bengal BJP chief Tathagata Roy was appointed governor of Tripura while Tamil Nadu BJP leader V Shanmuganathan was sent to Meghalaya.

Roy is the brother of Trinamool Congress MP Saugata Roy while Shanmuganathan – a former RSS pracharak – is an additional secretary at the BJP's parliamentary party office in Delhi.

A communiqué from Rashtrapati Bhavan said Arunachal Pradesh governor Lt Gen Nirbhay Sharma was shifted to Mizoram, a state that has seen six governors since the NDA came to power last May.

The retired army officer has three more years left. He will be replaced by former Assam chief secretary JP Rajkhowa as the governor of Arunachal Pradesh.

Former Odisha minister Droupadi Murmu will be the new governor of Jharkhand, replacing Syed Ahmed, who has been shifted to Manipur.

The government had cleared these names after several rounds of meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Rajnath Singh. BJP chief Amit Shah was also in the loop. The latest round of appointments, however, still leaves Bihar, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand without a full-time governor. Sources suggested it could take another 15-20 days to finalise the names of new Raj Bhavan occupants for these states. The names of minority affairs minister Najma Heptulla, former finance minister Yashwant Sinha, former army chief VP Malik and a few others were also doing the rounds as probable candidates, but they failed to make it to the Tuesday list. The NDA government's appointment of governors has been riddled with controversy with a number of high-profile resignations and the Opposition alleging the BJP was deliberately pushing out Congress-era occupants of Raj Bhavans and humiliating them.

HEALTH SERVICES

TIMES OF INDIA, MAY 12, 2015

Govt to provide free diagnostic tests for all

Rema Nagarajan

NEW DELHI: The Centre is set to announce a scheme for providing free diagnostic tests, including several blood tests, x-rays and advanced CT scans, for those visiting public health facilities. Private service providers will be roped in wherever required.

While the idea of providing free diagnostics has been hailed by all those aware of it, health economists and public health experts expressed concern over outsourcing the tests to the private sector, arguing that it is an "expensive and inefficient" way to provide the services.

Costs of drugs and diagnostics constitute about 70% of health expenditure in India and are estimated to push 5 crore people below the poverty line (BPL) annually. The proposed 'national strategy for providing essential diagnostics facilities free for all' is meant for anyone visiting a public health facility — from a village health post to a district hospital.

IT WILL COVER	
Blood and urine tests for diabetes	Liver and kidney function tests
Blood tests for dengue, malaria, typhoid	HIV tests, x-rays, ultrasound, CT scans

A panel of experts are learnt to have provided the government with a list of diagnostic tests considered essential for all categories of health facilities. The health ministry has also consulted some of the biggest companies in the diagnostic sector, including SRL, Dr Lal PathLabs, Quest Diagnostics, Mahajan Imaging and Star Imaging to thrash out all service provider issues.

Along with reducing people's health expenditure, the initiative is expected to help promote the diagnostics and reagents sectors, which currently have just over 20% share in the medical technology market.

Under the scheme, existing diagnostic infrastructure in government institutions is to be strengthened, and where there is no infrastructure, state governments would be supported to engage with private service providers for collection of blood samples, analysis and reporting. The scheme is meant to outsource only high-cost, low-volume tests. In government facilities with inadequate personnel, the scheme will be in-sourcing personnel through contracts with the private sector. X-rays are to be sent electronically to radiology centres for proper diagnosis as most physicians are not trained to read x-ray films. The Centre will also help states to have CT scan services at district level under public-private partnerships. The shares of outsourcing and use of the government's own facilities are expected to vary between states depending on the robustness of their health infrastructure.

Health economist Sakthivel Selvaraj expressed skepticism, saying "With a slashed health budget and no allocation in the budget for the scheme, where will they find additional resources for this? Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan are already providing diagnostic facilities more efficiently without outsourcing. Why not follow that model? Why follow a model of outsourcing that has failed in several states like Bihar and Chhattisgarh? Outsourcing only adds to the cost."

However, government sources pointed out that the scheme is meant to be implemented under the National Health Mission, which has always seen the allocated money remaining unspent. Sources added that instead of huge capital expenditure on procuring diagnostic machines, the government could provide services to more people for the same amount of money by outsourcing.

"The fear is that such outsourcing without thinking through the consequences could lead to the private sector eventually blackmailing the government and raising costs for services. India spends less than some of the poorest countries on health and this unwillingness to spend on health is the reason for having to resort to outsourcing to the private sector. In a country with such weak monitoring mechanism how will it work?" asked Reetika Khera, associate professor of economics in IIT Delhi.

Some public health technology experts, however, felt that selective outsourcing has been shown to work in certain other technology intensive areas such as ambulance care/108,

currently in place across 25 states and UTs which they said would not have been possible for the government to provide without private engagement. Similar engagements for laboratory and CT are being used in many states including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, they pointed out. "Experience suggests that measured formula-based centralised outsourcing is recommended only for ancillary services that are technology intensive," said one such expert.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

STATESMAN, MAY 11, 2015

Land and People

The achievement has been diplomatic and legislative no less. After considerable resentment when in the Opposition and prevarication during the year it has been in power, the BJP government can be credited with having “operationalised” India's Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh, conceptualised in 1974 during the heyday of Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The fact that it took 41 years for the treaty to attain fruition underlines the daunting intricacies of an emotive issue. The enclaves had symbolised a geopolitical dichotomy, embedded in the “our country-their people” syndrome. Last Thursday's passage of the Bill to ensure that the LBA materialises is, on the face of it, a diplomatic triumph for Narendra Modi and not least Sushma Swaraj. The Bhartiya Janata Party has eventually deferred to the wishes of the neighbour. From the legislative perspective, the development will rank as a case-study in parliamentary consensus, with even feisty Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress toning down its opposition. The party MP, Sugato Bose's compliments to Ms Swaraj signify exceptional parliamentary unanimity. Strikingly, all members present in the Lok Sabha rose above party lines and regional differences to vote for the Bill. Perhaps a not dissimilar consensus on sharing the Teesta waters will rank as yet another breakthrough in international relations. The parliamentary approval signifies a fresh chapter in the rollercoaster bilateral relations. Mr Modi's prompt call to Begum Hasina has been another stroke of diplomacy, though hoi-polloi has been kept guessing on what actually transpired through the ether, most importantly the reaction of the Bangladesh Prime Minister. The effectiveness of the agreement, which involves hundreds of thousands of people in the enclaves, will hinge substantially on the followthrough by the states that will be affected by the long overdue swapping of land in adverse possession - West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya... and now Assam. The last has been an inordinately belated entrant, primarily because of politicking and/or prevarication by both the Congress and the BJP. Indeed, the BJP's stand on Assam and LBA has been determined by whether or not it is in power at the Centre. And it has effected a somersault on Assam 48 hours before the passage of the Bill. Modi's realpolitik at its best? He is acutely aware that exclusion of Assam would have created other complications in terms of geostrategy. For all the four states, the exchange of enclaves will entail the transfer of land and resettlement of those who will come over. Ergo, the Centre urgently needs to take a call on the concerted demand for assistance in terms of rehabilitation, specifically the imperative for a hearth and home in hitherto “alien” land. It will call for a national effort to handle the 21st century “transfer of population” within the subcontinent.

JUDICIARY

STATESMAN, MAY 14, 2015

A Judiciary for the Haves

Kuldip Nayar

As a law-abiding citizen, I have faith in the court to rectify a wrong done to me. I have never been cheated except when the Emergency was declared and I was detained without any rhyme or reason.

The two-judge bench accepted my wife's habeas corpus petition and released me. The reason for my release was that since I did not belong to any political party and pursued my journalistic work professionally, there was no ground to detain me. Both the judges were, however, punished. The senior judge S. Rangarajan was transferred to Sikkim and Justice R.N. Aggarwal was reverted to the Sessions Court from where he had been elevated. Both judges were sacrificed at the altar of press freedom.

Never have I suspected influence, pressure or money coming in the way of justice. But two recent judgments have shaken my faith in law courts. In the first case, actor Salman Khan has been released on bail without spending a minute in jail and, in the second, J Jayalalithaa who had to step down as chief minister of Tamil Nadu, has been exonerated from the charge of having amassed wealth disproportionate to her known income.

Granted the lawyers must have argued well. Both Salman and Jayalalithaa can afford the best of legal brains in the country. But the judges who heard their cases too have to see that they deliver justice however weak the prosecution is. I am sorry that this has not happened. It is not because the lawyers had the better of judges, but because other considerations must have come in. These are fit cases for a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to look into under the Supreme Court. It would be a travesty of justice if the verdicts against Salman and Jayalalithaa are accepted and nothing else is done in the matter.

Take the case of Salman. The trial court came to the conclusion that he was driving the car in a drunken condition and he killed a person sleeping on the pavement. Rightly, a sentence of five years was pronounced because that is the minimum the judge could have awarded under the law. However, the actor got interim bail before the case was taken up for regular bail in Bombay High Court. There, the judge suspended the sentence pending the hearing of Salman's appeal. True, it is his prerogative. But would he do so in the case of an ordinary citizen? The VIP status of the culprit seems to have been the main criterion for taking a lenient view of the crime. I wish the judge had taken into consideration the

families of the victims. He does not even recommend more compensation than the Rs 19 lakh which Salman had himself deposited and which the court had not distributed to the victims for 13 long years, the period for which the case was pending. Salman's influence or money power came in handy to delay the case as long as possible and the police were willing partners. Parliament should take note of it and ensure that the machinery of law does not move so slowly. There is no politics in it. Only money has mattered. Surely, the system can devise ways to stop the well-to-do from committing a crime and getting away with it. This can happen provided the MPs act according to their conscience, not the party whip which again is politics.

One exception that comes to my mind straightaway is Sanjeev Nanda's hit-and-run case. Even after protracted proceedings and inordinate delay, Nanda was convicted and sent to jail. His father was the former naval chief and still he could not save Sanjeev. On the other hand, Salman uses his influence and escapes jail even though it can be argued that his sentence has been suspended. In the case of another actor, Sanjay Dutt, there was so much furore because he was released on parole many a time.

Coming to Jayalalithaa's exoneration, it is equally amazing. The luxury in which she wallows is not a matter of perception. It can be seen and assessed in terms of buildings and other visible things. The judge is entitled to give a culprit the benefit of the doubt, but closing his eyes to reality amounts to favouritism. Why this concession, will be the question asked straightaway.

The judgment stated that the total income of Jayalalithaa was Rs 34.76 crore. If Rs 13.50 crore, added by mistake, is deducted the income would come to Rs 21.26 crore. But the assets of Jayalalitha are Rs 37.59 crore as accepted by the judge. There is still a difference of Rs 16.32 crore between the assets and the actual income. But the judge stated that the difference came to only Rs 2.82 crore which is 8.12 per cent above the income. However, the special public prosecutor said that Rs 16.32 crore translated to assets 76 per cent above known income. Obviously, there was a mistake somewhere that needs to be rectified.

That the judicial system is tilted towards the haves is a fact which cannot be denied. There is no provision of referendum in the Constitution and Parliament will not be inclined to interfere because the main political parties, the Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), will never agree to radical changes. Their real base is the middle class, not prone to anything drastic.

The verdicts in the cases of both Salman and Jayalalithaa may have shaken the nation. The Narendra Modi government has still four years left in its fiveyear term. Therefore the nation, however handicapped, has to wait for fresh elections, which may be contested on different issues altogether. Still some changes need to be made so that the lower half also have access to remedies to get their due.

The writer is a noted journalist, columnist and commentator.

LIBRARIES

TIMES OF INDIA, MAY 11, 2015

Libraries robbed of books at Calicut University

[K R Rajeev](#)

KOZHIKODE: Calicut University is facing a strange situation — hundreds of books getting lost from its libraries each year due to rampant book lifting and borrowers not returning their lot. As many as 1,261 books were reported missing in the latest audit report. Taking serious note of the issue, the state government's local fund audit wing has asked the varsity to recover the loss incurred from the persons involved. Library authorities said that the scale of book lifting and non-return could be bigger if the figures from the varsity's main CHMK central library, which has around 1.2 lakh books, are included. The university — which conducted a stock verification after eight years in 2014 — is in the process of consolidating the figures.

CHMK library had installed CCTV cameras inside the library last year as a deterrent. "A major issue in libraries of the varsity run self- financing institutions is that the most librarians are employed on temporary basis that make it difficult to hold them accountable for the loss," said university librarian Dr Abdul Azeez T A.

The institute of engineering and technology (IET) within the varsity campus has lost 703 books while the university teacher education centre (UTECE), Kaniyambetta has lost 236 books. As many as 152 books are missing from the department of lifelong learning. The reasons were the same as mentioned above.

"Only the central library has CCTV monitoring and mesh windows. Other libraries are vulnerable to book lifting. Even more worrisome is the menace of students tearing away the pages from reference books. Also, there is the issue of books issued in the name of teachers which they keep in custody or some that get misplaced. These are then transferred to the name of other teachers when they retire," an assistant librarian said.

The university librarian said that as per new UGC regulations, a figure of five (missing) per 1,000 transactions — including issue, consultations and reference — can be treated as reasonable. "Though there are technologies like radio frequency identification (RFID) to protect library assets, it is not cost effective to be implemented in all libraries," an official said.

As many as 1261 books have been reported to be lost from its libraries in a latest audit

report. Taking a serious note of the issue, the state government's local fund audit wing has asked the varsity to fix the responsibility for the issue and recover the loss incurred from the persons involved.

Library authorities say that the scale of book lifting and non-return of books could be bigger if the figures from the varsity's main CHMK Central Library, which has around 1.2 lakh books are included. The university which conducted a stock verification after eight years in 2014 is in the process of consolidating the figures of the examination.

THE CHMK library had installed CCTV cameras inside the library last year to curb the practice of book lifting and tearing of pages of books.

"A major issue in libraries of the varsity run self- financing institutions is that the most of the librarians are employed on temporary basis which make it difficult to hold them accountable for the losses," Dr. Abdul Azeez T A, University Librarian said.

The institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) in the varsity campus has lost 703 books while University Teacher Education Centre (UTECE), Kaniyambetta has lost 236 books. As many as 152 books are missing from the department of lifelong learning.

Sources at the varsity central library said that book lifting by students and non- return of books were the main reasons for the missing of large number of books.

"Only the central library has CCTV monitoring and mesh windows installed. The other libraries are vulnerable to book lifting. Even more worrisome is the menace of students tearing away of pages from reference books. Also there is the issue of books issued in the name of teachers which they keep in their custody or gets misplaced and which are then transferred to the name of other teachers when they retire," an assistant librarian said.

University librarian said that as per the new UGC regulations, missing of five books per 1000 transactions, including issue, consultations and reference, can be considered as reasonable missing.

"Though there are technologies like Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) to protect library assets, it is not cost effective to be implemented in all libraries due to the expense involved," an official said.

MASS MEDIA

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAY 11, 2015

Delhi govt to help 'good' journalists set up newspapers, channels: Kejriwal

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said his government will help "good" journalists who want to start a newspaper or a news channel.

The chief minister made the comments during a Google hangout chat with AAP volunteers. The remarks came at a time when the Delhi government is being accused of gagging the media after a new media circular which tells officials to report defamatory content.

"The media keeps showing us in a negative light. But don't worry about that. The people of Delhi are happy with us and as far as starting a media house is concerned; we don't want to do that. There are good people in the media too, who are not happy. If some senior people come together and want to start a news channel or news paper, the government will help them. We also want an honest media house which shows news," Kejriwal said.

This was Kejriwal's first such interaction with the volunteers after AAP's spectacular win in Delhi assembly polls.

The Delhi CM also said that the government will amend the Delhi School Education Act and Rules 1973 to regulate fee hike in private schools. "Some private schools arbitrarily increase their fees. So we have decided to amend the act first," the chief minister said. Also within a year, the Delhi government will start 45 new model government schools and improve the infrastructure of 100-150 existing government schools, he said. Kejriwal also reiterated that his government will fulfill all its promises. He also said that the government has reduced the electricity tariff and started working towards bringing in the Lokpal. On his government's continuing tiff with the centre over administrative matters, the CM said: "The police are targeting us and the Centre is asking them to do so. They have got false FIRs registered against our three MLAs. I have been writing to the Union home ministry but have not received any response yet." He told his party volunteers to draw comparisons between the work done by the Modi government at the Centre in one year and the Delhi government in 100 days. Kejriwal government will complete 100 days in office on May 26.

POLICE

STATESMAN, MAY 14, 2015

Self-condemning

Administrative and legal experts may quibble over whether the Delhi Police should function under the control of the union home ministry or the local government. The common man has no such problem he is convinced there is no control at all. As confirmed by a head constable of the traffic wing hurling a brick at a woman. The despicable incident came into public focus because it had been captured on video there would be several such outrages that elude public/media attention. These provide evidence of inadequate control and underscore the essence of the effort to empower elected representatives with some authority over the “criminals in uniform”, as Justice Mulla had slammed them. It must be stressed that the exercise to wrest control of the police from “distant” North Block began long before anyone had heard of Arvind Kejriwal; Sheila Dikshit had made the same demand too. Veterans would recall that when the “grand old man” of Delhi politics, Jag Parvesh Chandra, had been elected Chief Executive Councillor (prior to the conferment of partial statehood) in 1983 he too had articulated the same point. The Morarji Desai Janata government had ordered the introduction of the Commissioner system of police administration without appreciating that in other cities where it operated the police were under the control of the state government and elected representatives, there was no such “cushion” in Delhi he had observed. That the home ministry was answerable to Parliament was a myth, he had averred. Thirty-odd years later his observations have assumed enhanced relevance. Not everyone appreciates the manner in which Kejriwal is doing things, his running battle with the Delhi Police is distasteful, yet if he were to stage another dharna on the issue the public support would be massive.

Massive enough to shake Modi-sarkar and his 282 members of the Lok Sabha out of their slumber of convenience for the cops have made a fine art of keeping Raisina Hill happy. Yet the problem is not confined to issues of “control”, it also reflects deterioration in the quality of leadership, training and discipline of the force. As well as it having become a VIP-pandering organisation that exploits the common citizen when it does not ignore him. To reduce the “debate” to personalities would appear petty, but it must be pointed out that the citizen never felt so helpless when, under the very same system, the police was led by the likes of Ved Marwah, Nikhil Kumar and KK Paul... The last few Commissioners have been found so wanting that brick-hurling cops have had their way all the catchy slogans notwithstanding. Regardless of the “Kejriwal factor” the Delhi Police requires a “shake-up”. It must be made accountable to the citizen, the taxpayer who funds it.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, MAY 11, 2015

Delhi Police to get a makeover with new uniforms, bulletproof jackets
Karn Pratap Singh

The Delhi police personnel will soon be seen in a new avatar.

The men-in-khaki are set to get a new uniform and caps, besides better and upgraded bulletproof jackets and weapons that they carry while patrolling the city.

The current police uniforms are made of not so user-friendly terrycotton cloth material. Plans are afoot now to replace this with a special fabric (khadi polyvastra) for more comfort. New lighter and cotton-made waterproof caps will also be introduced in place of the old woolen beret caps that caused discomfort to the constabulary, who do most of the leg work.

COMING SOON

Delhi police will soon get a major upgrade with modern weapons, bullet-proof jackets and comfortable uniforms

WHAT IS COMING: BULLETPROOF JACKETS/VESTS

Lightweight bulletproof jackets for **COMMANDOS** and **POLICE PERSONNEL** controlling riots



Maximum weight: **5 kgs**, Three plates (One to protect groin)

BENEFITS

- Non-ballistic fabric reinforced with soft armour panels made of aramid/kevlar. Hard armour plates
- Provided with collar & foldable groin protection, stops rifle bullets, like 7.62x51mm Nato Ball, AK-47

Lightweight bullet-resistant waistcoat for **SENIOR OFFICERS**



Weight: About **2.5 kg**

BENEFITS

- Fabricated with high quality ballistic grade aramid/kevlar fabric.
- Protects wearer from bullet velocity up to 425 meters per second from a range of about 5 metres
- Absorbs bullets from 0.22 caliber long rifle, carbine/ sten gun, 9mm parabellum, 0.32 caliber revolver and pistol

Lightweight ballistic body armour for beat **PATROLLING STAFF**



Weight: Around **3 kg**, front and back plates

BENEFITS

- Tailored with non-ballistic fabric with hard armour plates
- Provides protection against hand-grenade splinters, absorbs fire from assault rifles.
- Defeats bullet velocity up to 840 metres per second from a range of around 10 metres
- Takes AK-47 bullets



UNIFORM, CAPS, SHOES,

THE NEW STUFF

The bulletproof jacket, which is in use currently, weighs around 11 kgs and cause problems for the cops. These, however, will soon be replaced with an advanced and lighter version of bullet-resistant vests. The new ballistic vest will come in three categories - for top rank officers, for officers engaged in patrolling and law and order duty, and commandos handling riots and terror attacks.

According to a senior police officer, the average weight of the new bulletproof vest, being designed for senior officers and constabulary, will be between 2.5kg and 3kg. Similarly, bullet-resistant jackets for commandos will not exceed 5kg and the jacket will have an additional protective gear for shielding the groin.

Special commissioner of police (provision and logistics), Rajesh Malik has been made in-charge for finalizing the process of procuring modified lightweight bulletproof jackets for Delhi police personnel. Several international as well as Indian companies have approached the provision and logistics department with their products.

“Once the product and its manufacturing company are decided, the tendering process will be started. While the average cost of the existing bulletproof jacket is between Rs 30,000 and Rs 40,000, the price might go up to around Rs 1 lakh, considering the requirement of protection gears in the jackets,” said a senior officer.

Prodded about the urgency in procuring lighter bulletproof jackets, the officer said police personnel were often reluctant to wear the existing bullet-resistant jackets owing to its heavy weight.

“The material used in the existing bulletproof jacket not only increases its weight but also make it not so user-friendly for policemen who work for long hours,” the officer explained.

About the new uniform, the officer said, the decision to explore good quality, eco-friendly and breathable cloth material was taken by Delhi police commissioner BS Bassi.

Apart from uniform, caps and bulletproof jackets, the city police are already in the process of replacing outdated weapons with advanced armaments.

DECCAN HERALD, MAY 14, 2015

Police promotion may be linked to attitude towards women

Shemin Joy

Gender-sensitivity index to be developed and applied wisely

Policemen misbehaving with women could end up on the losing side if state governments accept a Central advisory to link their promotions to their attitude towards the fairer sex.

Advocating a “comprehensive and holistic” approach to tackle crime against women, the Union Home Ministry on Tuesday asked the states to develop a gender-sensitivity index and apply it appropriately while taking decisions on posting of police officers in the field.

With the recent incident of a Delhi traffic policeman hitting a woman with a brick making headlines, the ministry’s advisory also wants inclusion of gender sensitivity in the Annual Performance Appraisal Report (APAR) to ascertain the conduct of personnel.

“Attitude of police personnel towards women should be considered for their posting or promotions,” it said.

Besides the suggestion for organising gender sensitisation programmes, the advisory has asked for strict action against police personnel, “who exhibit discourtesy or bias against women or neglect their supervisory responsibilities”.

Another concern is the rise of cybercrimes targeted at women and children. The ministry wanted the police to “periodically” check internet content to curb pornographic videos on women and children. The advisory suggested setting up of specialised cyber crime cells.

The ministry said state police personnel are not registering crimes against women under “appropriate” sections of the IPC “leading to suppression of heinous crimes and misrepresentation in crime data”. “Proper sensitisation of lower level functionaries is needed to make optimum use of existing legislations,” it said.

The advisory observed that in some cases, acid attack victims were not given Rs 3 lakh compensation as mandated by the Supreme Court. Same is the case with the mandatory registration of FIR in missing children case.

The ministry warned that these “deficiencies need to be rectified immediately” to avoid contempt proceedings.

Citing official statistics that 94.3 per cent of rape cases are committed by people known to victims, the advisory noted that this has “some serious social connotations” as it points out a deep-rooted social malady. It wanted states to encourage Universities to undertake research on the causes of “such criminal psyche and possible solutions” besides deterrent punishment through legal trial.

“The police is a state subject and hence it is the duty of the state government to

modernise the police with respect to societal aspirations, sensitivity, gender and operational needs,” the advisory said.

“The government of India has already greatly enhanced the state’s share of central taxes from 32 per cent to 42 per cent. In view of the same, the states are requested to take immediate and effective measures,” it added.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

TELEGRAPH, MAY 13, 2015

Slow and unsteady - Democracy has been a hurdle to India's development

Commentarao - S.L. Rao

The death of Lee Kuan Yew raises the question once again whether his model of authoritarian democracy could have given India faster progress. During the 31 years when Lee was prime minister, followed by the 20 years when he was senior government advisor, with his son cast in the same mould (as prime minister), Singapore saw average income rise 100 times, investments from across the globe, a widely-respected civil service and world-class infrastructure. A small British imperial outpost had become a global trading and financial centre.

In many ways, Singapore is a police state but one with the most comfortable amenities. Newspapers are bland because there are strict restraints. Severe punishments ensue for littering or spitting or urinating on roads. Defamation laws are so stringent that they have bankrupted or made many Singaporeans fugitives. Many have languished in jail. But there are good jobs for all, excellent health and education services and superb infrastructure. Since water is a problem, Singapore has some of the world's largest desalination plants to get fresh water from sea water. Ministers and civil servants are very well-paid and the jobs are much sought after. Any malfeasance is subject to severe punishment. One does not hear of corruption among government functionaries as one does about India's politicians and bureaucrats.

So, did India take the wrong route after independence by having universal suffrage for a largely illiterate, poverty-stricken, rural and agriculture-based population? India subsequently reduced the voting age to 18. Should India have confined the vote to the literate and older people?

The answer today is clear and the question is risible. Ramachandra Guha in his *India after Gandhi* and many other analysts have proved that. The Mahatma made a nation out of a very disparate people. The leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, B.R. Ambedkar and C. Rajagopalachari led India towards democracy and universal suffrage. They combined their ideas with building, respecting, supporting and sustaining the institutions of the legislature, judiciary and a courageous executive. They fought for the principles of freedom (life, property, expression, religion) in the Constitution. Thus they made the idea of nationhood work and got people to recognize that in their unity lay their strength and prospect of prosperity.

At the time of Independence, India was a caste-ridden society. At least till the 1980s, caste and community were essential to vote-banks. The Congress based its election calculations on these vote-banks. Other parties followed. After the dismal failure of the anti-Congress government of the Janata Party because of the petty ambitions of Charan Singh and Chandra Shekhar, Jayaprakash Narayan's followers, in particular the two Yadavs - Mulayam and Lalu - built their own vote-banks. V.P. Singh emerged as the

messiah who resurrected the Mandal report that gave reservations in government jobs to other backward classes. The Supreme Court capped all reservations at 50 per cent for scheduled castes and tribes and OBCs. The number of jobs were inconsequential, but it helped in consolidating the vote.

Meanwhile, the voters were showing that they understood the power of the vote. State electorates after every election gave new parties the power to govern them. Anti-incumbency - which meant that voters were giving an opportunity to another party because the incumbent party had failed to deliver - saw changes at every election. As political leaders understood this, they developed economic incentives. These ranged from the "*garibi hatao*" of Indira Gandhi to increasingly subsidized food grains, kerosene, cloth, electricity, fertilizer to farmers and so on. The last United Progressive Alliance government introduced the rural employment guarantee scheme, committing to minimum employment for each rural family. These were all giveaways that did not build lasting assets. They were meant to persuade voters to allow a party to continue in office.

Other governments built roads, dams, irrigation canals, storage, separate agricultural feeders for electricity, brought in industries, improved education and health opportunities. Elections in the 21st century have shown that in Gujarat, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the same party has won more than once. As Gopal Kadekodi writes in a recent *Economic and Political Weekly* article, a vote was no longer a matter of self-esteem, showing moral superiority or a source of satisfaction. Voters understood that they could now evict non-performing governments and retain performing ones. In recent years, the Bharatiya Janata Party has won power by concentrating on governance and development by focussing not so much on caste and religion as on class and regional factors. Voters too are not responding on the basis of caste or religion, although Muslims continue to look for saviours to protect them.

Indian voters have realized the power of their votes. Voter turnout has been around 65 per cent in each election (rising from 44.87 per cent in 1951 to 66.4 per cent in 2014). People have prospered. Life expectancy at birth went up from 31.7 years in 1951 to 69.6 years in 2011-15. Urbanization rose from about 17 per cent in 1951 to 31.7 per cent in 2011 as people sought to improve livelihoods; per capita income went up from Rs 7,824 in 1951-52 to Rs 61,564 in 2011-12, registering an annual growth rate of 13.57 per cent. Such socio-economic transformations do not seem to have made much change to the voter turnout. There is, in fact, evidence that there is an inverse relation of being well-to-do with voting.

The downside of universal suffrage had been the need to woo votes on the basis of caste and community. However, the reduction of the voting age to 18 appears to have reduced the impact of such appeals in comparison to those of giving opportunities and building capabilities, be it for education, health services, improved living conditions or enhancing livelihoods. Many state governments have responded by spending increasing sums on economic and social projects.

These expenditures certainly added to peoples' well-being, but far less than they would have had not a great deal of money been stolen through corruption or bad targeting of beneficiaries. The bid to improve defence capabilities added to corruption. Imported equipment were preferred to local production. The free media did little to expose and reduce such corruption. Attempts by Indira Gandhi to control the media during the Emergency and Rajiv Gandhi's efforts to introduce legislation for the same purpose could not curtail press freedom. But greed for money and power have done so. The ponderous judicial system favoured the well-off and powerful. Corruption entered the judiciary as well.

Elections have become increasingly expensive and the preserve either of the wealthy or the corrupt or of those willing to repay of the investment they have made in the process. Political parties collect vast sums of money and are not monitored. Parties in power take commissions for favours rendered and also divert government funds for their profit. Penalties for these are insufficient and need years to be proved. The media that is supposed to be the watchdog is quite ineffective in exposing these thefts.

The problem is not democracy or universal suffrage. It is the ability of politicians and bureaucrats to design schemes for government spending in a way that makes theft of funds possible.

India would never have survived as a nation had someone like Lee been its leader. But democracy, in the way that it has developed in India, is a hurdle to development. We must have tough limits and monitoring of election-funding, strong punishment for corruption and speedy trials. India must follow Singapore in paying ministers and bureaucrats exorbitantly, and punish them severely for stealing. It should insulate the judiciary and apply the same corruption rules to it and the executive at all levels of government, including municipalities and *panchayats*. India must do away with the discretionary powers of the government, establish transparent mechanisms for government spending and drastically reduce the role of the public sector.

The author is former director-general, National Council of Applied Economic Research

BUSINESS LINE, MAY 8, 2015

David Cameron set to govern Britain for another 5 years

Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron speaks after retaining his parliamentary seat, at a count centre in Witney, Britain on May 8, 2015.

Prime Minister David Cameron won an emphatic election victory in Britain, overturning predictions that the vote would be the closest in decades to sweep into office for another five years, with his Labour opponents in tatters.

The sterling currency and share prices soared on a result that reversed expectations of an inconclusive "hung parliament" with Cameron jockeying for power with Labour rival Ed

Miliband. Instead, Cameron was due to meet Queen Elizabeth before noon to accept a swift mandate to form a government.

But despite the unexpectedly decisive outcome, more uncertainty looms over whether Britain will stay in the European Union - and even hold together as a country.

Scottish nationalists swept aside Labour, meaning that Scotland, which voted just a year ago to stay in the United Kingdom, will send just three representatives of major British parties to parliament and be all but shut out of the cabinet. That could revive calls for it to leave Britain.

Cameron's victory also means Britain will face a vote which he has promised on continued membership in the EU. He says he wants to stay in the bloc, but only if he secures changes to its rules in negotiations that have not yet begun.

Cameron returned, smiling, to the prime minister's office in Downing Street early on Friday.

With a few dozen seats yet to be declared in the 650-seat house, the Conservatives were on course for an overall majority to govern alone for the first time since 1992. They could also ask a small party to join them in government if they fall a few seats short.

Miliband was widely expected to resign as party leader. The BBC reported he would do so soon.

A majority would mean Cameron no longer needs the Liberal Democrats, with which he has governed since 2010. The centre-left party was crushed, perhaps reduced to single digits after winning 57 seats five years ago.

Among the stunning results, Ed Balls, in line to be finance minister if Labour had won, lost his seat.

Cameron sounded a conciliatory note, especially towards Scotland, likely to be his first immediate headache. "I want my party - and, I hope, a government I would like to lead - to reclaim a mantle we should never have lost, the mantle of one nation, one United Kingdom," Cameron said.

Sterling gained more than 2 cents against the dollar to rise above \$1.55 for the first time since late February, and looked on track to enjoy its biggest one-day gain against the euro since January 2009.

The FTSE 100 stock index was up 1.45 percent at 6985, approaching a record high set last month.

Scottish 'Tsunami'

With almost all of Scotland's 59 parliamentary seats counted, the Scottish National Party (SNP) had won 56 of them, up from just six five years ago, all but obliterating Labour in one of its historic strongholds. "We're seeing an electoral tsunami on a gigantic scale," said Alex Salmond, the party's former leader, now elected to represent it in parliament in London.

"The SNP are going to be impossible to ignore and very difficult to stop," he said, saying such a result would strip Cameron of any legitimacy in Scotland where his Conservative Party would have only one lawmaker.

The United Kingdom includes England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. England makes up 85 per cent of the population but Scottish politicians elected to parliament in London have historically held important government posts. That will now be impossible with the SNP holding nearly all Scottish seats.

In a body blow to Labour, Douglas Alexander, the party's campaign chief and foreign policy spokesman, lost his seat to a 20-year-old Scottish nationalist student. Scottish Labour leader Jim Murphy was also toppled.

Labour's Miliband is widely expected to resign in the wake of his defeat. A North London Socialist and self-described "geek" who never quite connected with working-class voters, he ran a campaign that was widely seen as better than expected, but was always far behind Cameron in polls that asked voters who they saw as a more credible leader. "This has clearly been a very disappointing and difficult night for the Labour Party," he told supporters after retaining his own parliamentary seat in Doncaster, northern England.

Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg is also expected to resign, after seeing the party humiliated as a response to his decision to join the Conservatives in government five years ago and abandon high profile election pledges.

He won his own seat but called it a "cruel and punishing" night.

The UK Independence Party, which wants an immediate British withdrawal from the EU, was on track to get two seats at best amid speculation that Nigel Farage, its leader, would fail to be elected and therefore have to step down. The party easily secured the third most votes, but could not translate this to many seats under Britain's system, in which candidates stand for seats in individual districts and a party's overall vote tally is meaningless. One other loser is the opinion polling industry which is likely to face an inquest over its failure to predict the outcome. Before the election, virtually all opinion polls had shown the Conservatives and Labour neck-and-neck.

POVERTY

ECONOMIC TIMES, MAY 11, 2015

NITI Aayog likely to junk expenditure criterion for estimating poor

A 14-member task force headed by NITI Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya is contemplating the 40% mark based on 2011 data from NSSO.

How many poor people does India have? During the United Progressive Alliance government's tenure, the number was put at 363 million, or about 30% of the country's 1.2 billion population. That number could see a big jump, with the [NITI Aayog](#) likely to suggest a blanket 40% cutoff, dropping the controversial expenditure criterion.

That would put the number of poor in India at about 484 million, two senior government officials told ET on condition of anonymity. The statistic carries a heavy political charge, as the UPA discovered to its cost. And, citing a higher number may be an advantage to any government seeking to burnish its pro-poor credentials and battling allegations of crony capitalism, analysts said.

A 14-member task force headed by NITI Aayog [vice chairman Arvind Panagariya](#) is contemplating the 40% mark based on 2011 data from the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). The task force is expected to submit its report to PM Modi in June.

"While the task force is looking at various measures, there is a near majority on fixing a relatively realistic proportion of the population as poor and keeping this consistent over a period of time so as to be able to track the growth process downward," said one of the officials who was at the first meeting of the task force last month. The government wants to use the estimate for purely analytical purposes, with NSSO numbers being revised every five years, said the second official, who was also present at the meeting.

This will help the government gauge whether social sector schemes are reaching the poor and help avoid the kind of controversy that broke out when the poverty line was defined on the basis of daily per capita expenditure.

The poverty line carries significance as a large number of social sector schemes are directed toward those below it.

This suggests that if it's lowered too much, many deserving sections get left out. Too high and many that don't need it also come into the net, adding to costs. The [Suresh Tendulkar committee](#) sought to broaden the definition of poverty and stipulated a benchmark daily per capita expenditure of Rs 27 in rural areas and Rs Rs 33 in urban locations in 2011-12, arriving at a cutoff of 22% of the population, which sparked a furious row as critics said the numbers were unrealistic.

The C Rangarajan committee was set up to review this and raised the limit to Rs 32 and

Rs 47 for rural and urban areas respectively, putting the mark at 30%. That 2014 report also didn't assuage critics and it wasn't accepted by the [Narendra Modi](#) government, which set up another panel to estimate poverty in the country and suggest measures to alleviate it.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

STATESMAN, MAY 11, 2015

Discovery of Science

Bikash Sinha

Jawaharlal Nehru was born in Allahabad on 14 November 1889. The year itself is significant. Within a couple of years, Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose had invented the m.m. wave transmitter in Presidency College. It was an astounding feat of far-reaching consequence. Bengal was at the threshold of a glorious Renaissance marked by discoveries and novel theories formulated by pioneers. The province excelled in literature, science, humanities, and also of course industry. Even without rapid communications, the news of the astonishing achievements was spread across the world.

Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel prize. Raman, Saha and Bose made phenomenal contributions to fundamental science. Raman was also awarded the Nobel prize, the first time for an Asian working in Asia. After 125 years, it is time to examine Nehru's legacy in terms of science and education, his twin passions. As the first Prime Minister of independent India, he had enthused the youth. His dream was to build a modern, self-reliant scientifically tempered, prosperous India. He believed that a firm foundation of science and technology was essential for rapid economic progress. He strove for a rational state, abjuring superstitions that were deeply ingrained in the Indian psyche. He created several institutions, coping with fiscal constraints while trying to transform his dream to reality.

Along with his friend Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, the first Prime Minister founded the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to bring science closer to industry. Unfortunately, however, despite the huge investment over the years, CSIR hasn't been able to sufficiently enthuse the industrial sector; the void and distrust between science and industry still persist. The bureaucracy in science establishments has turned out to be an impediment. The laboratories still remain isolated; interaction is not always effective. Homi Jehangir Bhabha - a theoretical physicist of international renown, a gifted painter, lover of music and art - appeared on the centrestage just around the time India gained independence.

A close friend of Nehru, they would address each other as bhai, extraordinary by any standard. Bhabha addressed two frontiers with his brilliance, talent and vitality. Pre-eminently, this entailed the pursuit of fundamental science at the Tata Institute of

Fundamental Research and the development of the nuclear power programme, almost an impossible task for an impoverished nation. But Nehru and Bhabha made it possible. India's nuclear programme is the greatest tribute to the brilliant legacy of Bhabha. It is wholly "made in India" and easily comparable with the world's best. The safety record of our nuclear programme is also one of the highest in the world. But the greatest tragedy is that we are nowhere near our target for a variety of reasons. Despite the technical competence, it is the human factor that has let us down. Bhabha would have been distressed.

The Apsara reactor went critical just about the time the world was taking stock of the great potential of nuclear power. Since then, we haven't progressed in accord with our agenda. In the sphere of fundamental research we have done reasonably well, but not all that well. We are not leaders in any field of fundamental science. Despite the achievements of Bose, Saha, and Raman, India is not a front-ranking nation in any branch of fundamental sciences. It is time to reflect and analyse what has gone wrong.

Any diagnosis will indicate that the bureaucracy, intellectual lethargy, lack of involvement, and above all apathy are the major factors. It is a depressing thought that "there is money but no men" today, whereas earlier "there were men but no money" - to quote my friend and distinguished genetist, the late Professor Obaid Siddiqui. Whatever happened to that passion to explore and unravel the mystery of nature? Scientists generally regard their appointments as a salary-earning device, essentially a job.

The spirit of discovery has been a striking casualty. To Nehru, the country owes the CSIR, the Planning Commission (now disbanded), and the Atomic Energy Commission which is now loaded with bureaucrats and only a handful of scientists and none of them of international standing. He had a keen interest in the space programme initiated by Homi Bhabha, and later developed famously by Vikram Sarabhai. It is at once a successful and visible accomplishment of contemporary Indian scientists. Calcutta, as it was then known, figured prominently in the scientific paradigm.

At the Atomic Energy Commission meeting, chaired by Homi Bhabha on 24 August 1964 at Trombay, it was decided to buy a "Tandem Van de Graft" accelerator for Bombay and build an "AVF Cyclotron" in Calcutta, obviously to take advantage of the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics and the University of Calcutta. Interestingly enough, I am writing this article at the Cyclotron Centre. Nehru would make it a point to visit all the important and flourishing centres of science. The late Professor A. P. Mitra once recounted the seemingly incredible story of Panditji regularly visiting the National Physical Laboratory in Delhi on his way to office.

The NPL was then being built. A great admirer of CV Raman, he never interfered with the running of any scientific institution, including the flagship Atomic Energy Commission. But he inspired them to achieve the best. A firm believer of “scientific temper”, he regarded interference as a clear sign of disrespect to the scientists and the institution. The establishments flourished and excelled primarily on account of this autonomy. The scenario today is almost exactly the opposite and the consequences are palpably visible and obvious. As Prime Minister, he would attend the Indian Science Congress every year.

The tradition continues but sadly without the commitment and excellence. Nehru was a “science guru” in the truest sense of the term. He encouraged scientists to treat science as a passion. That spirit has almost disappeared from today’s India. We treat science as a bureaucrat treats his job. Promotion and salary are the compelling factors. Quality of the work done gets a relatively minor rating.

As a product of Cambridge, he valued excellence in an educational institution and never allowed centres of learning to be used in the pursuit of a political agenda. The concept of autonomy led to the evolution of the best, the most talented, the most inspired and the most committed. Today, the heads of institutions are often less than mediocre, but they are “chosen” by the “political power”.

Truth to tell, there are no leaders in science and education to lead the country forward; they are at best persons of average calibre. And this observation is valid across the entire educational canvas - from the primary school to the research level and above.

Nehru was a visionary, a holistic and magnetic personality. He had an intense passion for literature, history and humanities. He was a great admirer of Rabindranath Tagore and he made sure that his daughter, Indira, studied in Visva-Bharati. Though he spent his early years in Britain, he rediscovered himself in course of the freedom struggle. Indeed, he “discovered India”.

Somewhere, somehow, something has gone wrong with our institutions of science and education. Overwhelming consumerism has throttled the spirit that Nehru and his contemporaries were prepared to die for.

There can be no quick-fix solution. India is a vast country, almost the size of a continent. Not that new institutions have not come up over the decades. IISERs, IITs, NITs are all primarily geared towards the “placement philosophy”. The IITs appear to exist only for

the export of talent. Bengal, with the best of talent, is the worst affected. The Bengalee parents' great dream is to somehow send their children to the USA and remain happy ever after.

Consumerism is not the only reason why things have gone haywire. In the manner of Nehru, we need to think in terms of a new spirit of Renaissance, long forgotten but absolutely essential for tomorrow's India and most particularly Bengal where talent is not in short supply but the outlook is distorted and the academic ambience often violent. And this has led to despair.

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URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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eGov: Smart maps, smarter cities

Smart maps and dynamic mapping technologies will be critical tools for the development of India's smart cities project.

By: Monalisa Sen

India is expected to see the greatest migration to cities of any country in the world in the next three decades, with over 400 million new inhabitants moving into urban areas. The expansion of India's urban population will also have to be met with an expansion of infrastructure that is 20 times the capacity that has been added to India's city over the last decade. While infrastructure, especially the creation of smart cities, has been a major focus area for the government, smart maps and dynamic mapping technologies will be critical tools for the development of India's smart cities project, says a new report.

The report, titled Smart Maps for Smart Cities: India's \$8 billion+ Opportunity, has been prepared by consulting firm Dalberg Global Development Advisors, in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The report, quantifies the value of smart maps to Indian citizens, businesses, and government within the context of India's urban development. It details how smart maps can facilitate the development of smart cities in little ways that add up to huge economic benefits for citizens, businesses, and government.

Smart maps in India have a unique opportunity for high-impact growth. Fewer than half of the country's five million kilometers of roads are mapped today, while only 10-20% of the country's businesses are listed on online maps. And, in a dynamically changing landscape like India, maps need to be updated faster and need better coverage of local businesses to make maps a highly useful tool for citizens.

Built on detailed analysis of nine high-potential uses of maps, the Dalberg Global Development Advisors study highlights that smart maps can help India gain upwards of \$8 billion in savings and value, save 13,000 lives, and reduce one million metric tonne of

carbon emissions a year, in cities alone. The benefits to society and economy as a whole are likely much greater.

Gaurav Gupta, managing director of Dalberg Asia, described the potential impact of the study: “Simple improvements in some of the most basic tools that citizens use can lead to significant social impact. Maps, by which citizens and organisations make sense of their surroundings, are one such ubiquitous and fundamental tool that technology has transformed,” he said. “The report shows that by liberalising policy to enable the best technology to be applied to the mapping sector, we can spur innovation in this industry and equip society with a critical tool for driving positive social and economic impact.”

In a dynamically changing landscape like India, maps need to be updated faster and need better coverage of local businesses to make maps a highly useful tool for citizens. The unique challenges of dealing with India’s diverse and quickly changing urban landscapes offer unique opportunities for mapping players to innovate with locally relevant solutions that will make maps more useful for citizens. Smart maps use mapping technology that capture a broad range of data and are built to update quickly and correctly in order to give people the most accurate information possible. Smart maps are also designed to be easy and intuitive to use in order to reach the widest possible audience, and they encourage innovation by making it easy for users or businesses to incorporate their own data.

KEY BENEFITS OF SMART MAPS

- * India loses \$11 billion annually due to traffic congestion on highways alone.
- * Smart maps will make commuting more efficient, helping consumers and businesses alike to save time and money.
- * Emergency service responses will significantly improve by the use of smart maps.
- * Smart maps that allow for crowd sourcing of information will allow small business owners list their businesses online.
- * Smart maps also allow consumers to find more information about local offerings, while also helping them locate the businesses they are interested in.