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TELEGRAPH

TIMES OF INDIA

TRIBUNE

CONTENTS

AVIATION	3
CIVIL SERVICE	4-11
DEFENCE, NATIONAL	12-13
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	14
EDUCATION	15-19
ELECTIONS	20-24
HEALTH SERVICES	25-27
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	28-29
LIBRARIES	30
POLITICAL PARTIES	31
POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT	32-34
SOCIAL PROBLEMS	35
TAXATION	36-37

AVIATION

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, NOV 13, 2015

Cheaper air tickets for travelling light

Aviation regulator allows carriers to roll out 'zero baggage' fares

Baggage charges will become cheaper for fliers who fly light. Aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has allowed carriers to roll out 'zero baggage' fares, which will bring down the cost of tickets booked under 'zero baggage'. The reduction in ticket prices is not specified and carriers are free to fix it; however, ticket prices are likely to come down by at least a couple of percentage points.

The regulator has taken into consideration that flyers would not flout the rule — if travellers carry check-in baggage despite booking tickets under zero baggage, they will have to pay a penalty.

At present, all private carriers allow up to 15 kg of check-in baggage at no additional charges. Baggage exceeding that weight are charged on a per-kg basis, and varies from airline to airline. Air India, however, allows up to 23 kg of free baggage.

Low-cost, no-frill carrier [SpiceJet](#) was the first to roll out the 'zero baggage' fare, where it offered a discount of R200 to every passenger booking under this scheme. Carrying a laptop or one handbag will not be charged under the 'zero baggage' scheme. But there is a caveat — anyone who carries baggage after booking under the scheme has to pay a fine of R500 for up to 10 kg, and up to R750 up to 15 kg. The new aviation circular came as an outcome of a meeting between domestic carriers, IndiGo, SpiceJet and AirAsia and the regulator in June. In April, 2015 the regulator had allowed unbundling services like baggage, on-board meals, preferred seats, use of lounge and other such additional services. Airlines expect a boost in revenue and higher traction once the unbundling is in full form, said experts. Also, experts said that baggage processing and handling is an additional cost for the airlines, and if a passenger does not carry any baggage, he should be given benefits for travelling light.

CIVIL SERVICE

INDIAN EXPRESS, NOV 15, 2015

Soon, failure to deliver services will cost govt officials dear

In the next assembly session, the Delhi government is planning to amend the Right to Citizens to Time-Bound Delivery of Services Act, 2011.

Delhi government officials who fail to deliver a certain service in time may soon have to pay compensation — to the person who had applied for the service — from their own pockets.

In the next assembly session, the Delhi government is planning to amend the Right to Citizens to Time-Bound Delivery of Services Act, 2011. The amendment is meant to ensure that government officials deliver service level agreements (SLAs) on time and it will cover a majority of the 350 services under the Act, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Saturday.

Registration of marriages, issuing OBC certificates and birth certificates are some of the services covered under the Act.

The amendment seeks to penalise officials who fail to deliver the service in time. The government is also planning to revise the compensation amount for delayed service and deduct it from the salary of the officer concerned.

The amendment will make the process of collecting the compensation easier. Earlier, the process of seeking compensation was a lengthy and cumbersome one. The complainant had to first approach the head of the department (HoD) concerned and then file an appeal. If the first appeal failed to yield results, he had to file another one to receive a fixed compensation amount of Rs 500.

The Delhi government has now decided to put the onus of the compensation process on the official concerned, not the complainant.

Explaining the changes the government is planning to introduce, Kejriwal said, “For example, if a certificate had to be issued within 15 days but the person receives it after 25 days, then compensation for the 10-day delay will be credited to his account or a cheque will be given to him. He will not have to file any appeal”.

“... The competent authority, like the HoD, will fix responsibility for the delay. If the HoD fails to do so in three months, the amount will be deducted from his own salary,” said the CM.

The Delhi cabinet is also planning to revise the timeline for providing these services. According to a proposal drafted by the revenue department, the government wants to make the process of availing these services faster.

The Delhi cabinet’s decision to do away with affidavits from gazetted officials or MLAs will also make the process of procuring documents easier, said A Anbarasu, divisional commissioner. On how the government will prevent false affidavits, he said, “We will conduct random checks and we will put up the details on our website”.

“Furnishing wrong information on self-attested documents will be made a criminal offence by the government,” said Kejriwal.

HINDU, NOV 9, 2015

State staff growing restive over increasing workload

A section of the government employees are growing restive not able to cope with the increasing workload and are demanding that the administration ease their burden by filling vacant posts and sanctioning funds to ensure effective implementation of government programmes.

“After the CM conducts a review meeting, the Chief Secretary holds a videoconference, followed by a meeting by the District Collector. Most of our time is spent attending meetings. Where is the time for field work?” asked AP Revenue Services Association president B. Venkateswarlu.

The government announces programmes but does not allocate funds to execute them, he said. Further, the government is planning to introduce grading system in Revenue Dept., to assess employees. “We will oppose such moves. Without providing staff, funds and infrastructure, how will the government assess our performance,” said Mr. Venkateswarlu.

BUSINESS STANDARD, NOV 13, 2015

7th pay panel's draft report riddled with dissent notes

The notes argue that it will widen the talent base available to govt to deliver increasingly complex services to a demanding population

Subhomoy Bhattacharjee

The seventh Pay Commission’s draft report to determine the new salary structure for the 5.5 million civil servants in the central government has got riddled with several dissent notes. The notes, mainly about bringing in parity between the top-ranked Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the specialised central services, argue that it will widen the talent base available to the government to deliver increasingly complex services to a demanding population. But the dissensions could exacerbate differences at the top of the bureaucracy in the Government of India, already reeling from the impact of pay-related problems for the retired armed forces personnel who have demanded ‘one rank one pension’.

“There is a strong case for considering talent in the government rather than remaining confined to limited choices within some cadres,” former expenditure secretary Dhirendra Swarup told Business Standard. Swarup is one of the few non-IAS officers who became secretaries in the government, under former finance minister Jaswant Singh.

The notes are also a first for the Pay Commissions, set up every 10 years by the central government to revise the pay and allowances of central government employees. In the fifth Pay

Commission, economist Suresh Tendulkar had put in a dissent note but it was on a macro theme suggesting a pruning of the bureaucracy and relating wages to performance.

But this time the notes reflect the sharp differences that have come up among the different cadres of government services about their pay and promotion avenues. There is a larger issue here. All the services taken together make up fewer than 150,000 people within the central government tasked with a mammoth level of administrative responsibility for a country of 1.3 billion people.

CIVIL SUPPLIES

Relative inter-cadre positions in Union government

Service	Cadre strength	Posting in ministries at SAG* level	Chances of being posted to ministries (%)	
Indian Administrative Service	4,572	162	71.1	
Indian Revenue Service (income tax)	3,382	0	12.4	
Indian Police Service	3,232	16	20.8	
Indian Forest Service	2,664	0	17.4	
Indian Audit & Accounts Service	634	1	39.8	
Indian Postal Service	443	1	36.6	
Indian Railway Traffic Service	822	2	21.1	
Indian Revenue Service (customs & central ex)	2,378	0	17.9	

Figures from Feb 2010; *Senior Administrative Grade Source: Civil Service Survey, 2010

So, frustrations among them could have far-reaching repercussions.

These men and women operate in a rigidly differentiated world through an appointment system that places them in cadres. The cadres almost mirror the caste differences in the larger society. The top-most cadres are the all-India services that include the IAS, Indian Police Service and

Indian Forest Service. Of them, the IAS are the most numerous, at 4,572 according to the Civil Survey Report of 2010, written by former cabinet secretary, K M Chandrasekhar. Below them are about 45 cadres clubbed as central civil services, which include the IFS, IA&AS and IRS.

The impact of this pecking order came out in the open recently in the list of empanelled officers for the post of 60 additional secretaries. These posts rank just one notch below that of the secretaries, who function as heads of department or ministries in the government. Of those empanelled, only three (railways, income tax and audit & accounts services) were from the non-all India services. Swarup said the numbers were even lower than those until the 1990s, when there were at least five non-IAS officers in the central government ministries. At joint secretary and senior levels, positions up to those of secretaries (senior administrative grade) in central ministries, the share of other services is minuscule when compared with IAS. Yet, this is where policies are shaped.

At the heart of the difference is a two-year increment offered to IAS officers when they join vis-a-vis other cadres. Since seniority within the government is decided on pay scale, the higher start assures these officers of a higher position at each grade. But as the IRS officers and others in their representations have pointed out, this makes it impossible for them to compete for additional secretary and secretary posts in the ministries.

But Chandrasekhar counters it saying officers from most non-IAS services have enough options to be promoted within their services. “There is need for both specialists and generalists in the civil services. The Indian government is a massive structure that demands many different skill sets”.

To correct some of the problems, the 2010 report had suggested setting up of a Central Civil Services Authority for officers from all the services after they completed 13 years of service.

Each officer would get to choose an area of specialisation for the rest of their career. It has not been implemented so far.

The report of the Pay Commission, headed by Ashok Kumar Mathur, a former judge of the Supreme Court, was held up due to Bihar Assembly polls. The commission was given a four-month extension in August. Besides Mathur, the others in the commission are Vivek Rae (IAS) as full-time member, besides part-time members Meena Agarwal (Indian Railway Accounts Service) and Rathin Roy, director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP). The commission is attempting to paper over some of the differences before the report goes to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. The commission did not respond to requests for an interaction on the contents of the report.

The differences have become so sharp that social media platforms like WhatsApp have been flooded with often derogatory comments from opposing cadres about each other, a first of sorts.

But both Swarup and Chandrasekhar held that such comments might not be serious enough to test the smooth functioning of the officers from different services when they were posted together.

HINDU, NOV 10, 2015

Now, Chhath Puja a gazetted holiday

JATIN ANAND

The AAP government on Monday declared that from now on Chhath Puja will be observed as a gazetted holiday.

A senior Delhi government official said the decision had been taken in line with an unofficial representation from more than a dozen Poorvanchali MLAs in Assembly.

All government offices will be shut on November 17.

Yamuna Aarti

As part of its efforts towards cleaning the river and promoting tourism, the Delhi government will hold its first-ever Yamuna Aarti at Kudesia Ghat on November 13. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will be the chief guest of the event.

INDIAN EXPRESS, NOV 10, 2015

Caste prejudice by IAS: IPS, others to pay panel

After IAS officers moved to stonewall any move to erode the edge given to them over other services, an ugly war of words recently played out between the two sides on social media.

SPOT THE ELITE CIVIL SERVANT WITH THE 'EDGE'



A post on social media mocking IAS officers.

Days after several officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) launched a campaign to preserve their privileged position over other Central services, a confederation representing officers from 20 civil services — including the Indian Police Service (IPS) — has now petitioned the Seventh Central Pay Commission claiming that the move by IAS officers “displays a caste prejudice”.

In its representation, the Confederation of Civil Service Associations (COCSA) talked about a “recent development” that “triggered a wave of anguish” among thousands of officers belonging to services which are part of the Confederation and many others. It also underlined that the development had a “potential to drive a wedge between services and cause irretrievable damage to esprit-de-corps”.

“No one disagrees that IAS occupies an important place and performs important function... But claiming that contribution of others, who face no lesser challenges, is inferior and insignificant and the intemperate language used to castigate and disparage other services to prove their point, is not acceptable and deserves to be condemned,” the COCSA stated.

“We have to submit with all responsibility and humility, that it displays a caste prejudice which has no place in a country which accords equal treatment to all. It is a regressive thought antithetical to the mainstream thinking of the 21st century India, which our recently selected young colleagues represent,” the representation added.

Arguing that “mutual trust and sense of camaraderie is sine qua non” for successfully meeting the onerous challenges they face in their jobs, the representation further stated that the “fostering of feeling of superiority among young officers and attempt to run down members of other services, is quite unfortunate”.

IAS officers are typically promoted two years earlier than their counterparts in other services, receive two additional increments, and are empanelled for positions in Central ministries far earlier in their careers. The other services are seeking parity, saying they have specialist skills the IAS does not.

After IAS officers moved to stonewall any move to erode the edge given to them over other services, an ugly war of words recently played out between the two sides on social media.

DEFENCE, NATIONAL

STATESMAN, NOV 13, 2015

OROP: Out of hand?

Reckless belligerence on the one hand, an overdose of political chicanery on the other, and the moral cowardice of the “silent majority” in backing off rather than injecting sanity into the stand-off have blended to ensure that OROP heads the list of four-letters words dominating the national discourse. When some veterans sought to burn their medals on Diwali they only succeeded in ensuring that lingering traces of the reputed military ethos went up in smoke - but hardly “seen” in an already polluted atmosphere. No one can dispute the old soldiers have grievances; resorting to desperate publicity-seeking ploys renders them no different from municipal workers suspending garbage-collection to press demands.

That cracks have developed in the veterans’ ranks, that an officer-jawan divide is evident ought to have caused the Jantar Mantar agitators (are they truly representative?) to review tactics, if not re-work strategy. Alerting photographers to the medal-burning bid and a march to Rashtrapati Bhawan without being granted an appointment by the Supreme Commander are blots on olive-green and both shades of military-blue. Blots that must impact discipline, the chain of command and the significance of “gongs” among those still “serving the colours.” Attempting to curry favour with Opposition parties negates the apolitical tradition of the armed services. The devious attempt to project the government as anti-soldier is dangerous: recall that it took little “poison” to trigger the post-Bluestar revolt in some Army units, or the Air Force mutiny over a Pay Commission award in the mid-1990s.

The administrative inefficiency and inconsistency of the Modi government is re-confirmed by the OROP impasse. If the notification issued last week is indeed the government’s final position why did Manohar Parrikar not muster the guts to issue a formal statement rather than leave it to the Prime Minister to claim the issue had been “resolved”? And what was the “window” the Prime Minister left open during another overly-publicised Diwali with the jawans? Are the goal-posts being shifted, as alleged? Yet it is understandable that no government, not even one yet to come to terms with a political battering, will allow itself to succumb to the kind of pressure the veterans are mounting. And that is where the silence of a vast number of former “generals” is

deafening, even demeaning. Before the confrontation snowballed some ex-chiefs ought to have played a more prominent role, averted the agitation from “skidding”. Having done so little, the impression in non-military circles is that they are waiting in the wings for what goodies the agitation will yield while sanctimoniously avoiding getting their hands dirty. In “civvy street” the image conjured up of a military vet is no longer of the likes of Cariappa, Manekshaw, Pereira and Arjan Singh... It has been replaced by the Jantar Mantar brigade.

TIMES OF INDIA, NOV 10, 2015

OROP: Ex-servicemen to return medals from today

NEW DELHI: The ex-servicemen will start returning their medals from today to protest the government notification on the implementation of One Rank, One Pension, which they have rejected.

"The notification that the government has issued completely murders the definition of OROP. In OROP's definition, a senior will never get less pension than a junior. In the government's notification, a senior got less pension than a junior. We reject this completely," Group Captain V K Gandhi (retd), general secretary of Indian Ex-servicemen Movement (IESM) told ANI.

"Mahatma Gandhi had started the 'Quit India' movement in 1942 and awaken the nation. We will take that example and awaken the nation and the ex-servicemen and request them to return their medals and explain to citizens that OROP has not been given to us," he added.

Gandhi said the medals will be returned outside Terminal 1 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) on Tuesday to educate the common man about the impending issue.

"Manohar Parrikar is speaking like this under the pressure of some bureaucrats. Our only demand is One Rank One Pension. Our request to Manohar Parrikar, Modi ji and Jaitley is to fulfil our demand, and no condition should be imposed on it," he said.

The protesting ex-servicemen had also met Delhi chief Mminister Arvind Kejriwal and briefed him about the OROP notification.

Rejecting objections against the One Rank, One Pension scheme by some army veterans, Parrikar had yesterday said that it is impossible to satisfy everyone.

"We have fulfilled the main one rank one pension demand including the Voluntary Retirement Scheme. This is a democracy and one has the right to put forth their demand, but they can't

expect it to be fulfilled every time. You fulfil one demand and another one springs up," Parrikar told reporters.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

STATESMAN, NOV 10, 2015

Dreze dropped

Whether or not the Prime Minister's wishful thinking on the economic scenario was attempted to bridge the gap between illusion and reality, the eleventh-hour exclusion of Jean Dreze from the panel of speakers at the Delhi Economics Conclave was as peremptory as it was insulting. Not least because he was dropped from the panel en route to Delhi after being invited to speak by the Bharatiya Janata Party government, pre-eminently its Chief Economic Adviser, Arvind Subramanian. To put it bluntly as we must, the host has shut the door on the face of the guest. Without question, the distinguished economist - who in league with Amartya Sen has recently authored *An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions* - deserved better. As inexplicable as the exclusion has been the manner thereof.

Mr Subramanian conveyed the disconcerting message to Dreze over phone when he was on the train. The government's claim that its afterthought had "nothing to do with Dreze's views and that he was free to attend the conference" is neither here nor there. The humiliating subtext being that he can be part of the audience, but not make a presentation... for which he was invited. That utter humiliation has provoked Dreze to condemn the conclave as "a mutual appreciation society with everyone on the same side". As much is clear from the Prime Minister's saccharine assurance on the state of the economy over the past "17 months".

Dreze's statement underlines the fact that no reason was proffered by the "functionary of the ministry of finance". While his predicament need not be equated with communal intolerance - the flavour of the season - it does exemplify the saffronite aversion to academic dissent... or "economic intolerance" to summon Manmohan Singh's expression. On closer reflection, it is of a piece with Sen being denied a second term as Chancellor of Nalanda University, the initiative to detoxify history books, and reconstitute the Indian Council of Historical Research and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library... to mention but a few instances of saffronite intervention in matters academic.

Dreze is an economist in his own right and his membership of Sonia Gandhi's National Advisory Council is merely a label in a sterling career. For general edification, he has done well to upload his presentation that wasn't, notably his opposition to the JAM trinity as the foundation of social policy - an acronym that stands for Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar, and Mobile. He is in the main opposed to recent experiments in hi-tech cash transfers. Altogether, he has struck at the roots of the government's economic policy. By uploading his proposed speech on the public domain, he has called the bluff of the Union finance ministry.

EDUCATION

TELEGRAPH, NOV 15, 2015

CBSE schools told to sing anthem

New Delhi, Nov. 13: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), India's largest school board, has told its 16,000 affiliated schools across the country to start the day with a rendition of the national anthem.

The board has issued a circular asking all its schools to comply with an order of Calcutta High Court on the anthem. In its order of September 22, 2014, the court ruled that "in all schools, the day work may begin with community singing of the anthem ' *Jana-gana-mana adhinayaka jaya he...*'.

"School authorities should make adequate provision in their programmes for popularising the singing of the Anthem and promoting respect for the National Flag among students," the order said.

The home ministry had circulated the order among all ministries for compliance. After the human resource development ministry forwarded the court order with an instruction for further circulation, the CBSE has issued the circular asking the schools to comply.

At present, schools do not follow any uniform pattern in the morning assembly. While some schools run by religious institutions prefer prayers and hymns, others go for the national anthem.

The CBSE circular said it had earlier issued a value education framework that lists Article 51 of the Constitution which speaks about fundamental duties. One such duty is to abide by the Constitution and respect ideals and institutions, the national flag and the national anthem.

A CBSE official said the latest circular would make all schools include the anthem in the morning assembly.

Sangeeta Bhatia, the principal of KIIT World School here, welcomed the CBSE circular and said schools would not object to singing the national anthem.

"I think respect to nation is above everything. Our country has so much of diversity. Within

diversity, cohesion comes by national identity. The national anthem bring us together," Bhatia said.

She said the practice of prayers may vary from school to school. Some may be having Christian prayers or Saraswati Vandana but they can include the anthem as the concluding song. "Our school has multi-faith prayers. Some other schools may have some other prayers. But they can have the national anthem as the culminating song," Bhatia said.

Lawyer Ashok Agrawal, who has fought several cases relating to the violation of the Right to Education law, disapproved the government's approach in pushing the national anthem.

"Nobody is against the national anthem. But I think the promotion of the national anthem should not be by compulsion. It should be by persuasion," Agrawal said.

STATESMAN, NOV 9, 2015

Gender remains an issue in education

Rudrashis Datta

French philosopher Rousseau's seminal fictional text on education 'Emile' focuses on the education of the boy Emile in great detail and goes into the education of the girl Sophie only when Emile has to be provided with a wife. Even then, the main intention of providing for Sophie's education is to ensure Emile retains the role of the master with Sophie playing a subservient role. This deep rooted gender-bias has been sustained in our education for long and today if there is a single issue that indicates a prime driver of social change it is the issue of gender in education.

While gender studies in education has attained the status of an independent discipline in higher education, critical operative issues related to gender and education in schools still remain unresolved in our country. While it is commonplace to suggest that girls have been at the receiving end of policy level neglect and classroom-based apathy since our Independence, the issue of gender typecasting which harms both boys and girls during the critical years of schooling cannot be missed.

Since schools are porous social institutions, socially determined gender biases still find their way into classrooms. It is common for girls to be made to endure damaging social control and domination, and for boys to be thrust into roles which expect them to be protectors and bread-winners. Either way, the critical childhood years are wasted in a struggle to conform to patriarchal social stereotypes which carry into adulthood.

Judged in this context, the role of school education in shaping healthy gender outlook attains importance. Unfortunately, in the Indian context, girl children have been victims of not merely neglect in terms of the difficulty they face in accessing schools, but also have been victims of hidden curriculum adversities which remain strong till this day. For example, it is a common experience to find teachers focusing attention on boys and interacting more with them thereby reinforcing the notion that boys are to be more social and outgoing than girls. Again, curricular segregation has resulted in girls being encouraged to go into areas which reinforce gender segregation, such as home science, nutrition and domestic skills, while boys are groomed in areas such as leadership skills or subjects with intense cognitive requirements such as sciences and mathematics.

Policy-level initiatives on gender division are comparatively recent. While most issues of education for the girl child have remained limited to ensuring their enrolment and retention in schools, the critical area of curricular segregation has remained unaddressed. The National Policy of Education, 1986, was the first document which explicitly accepted the importance of education of the girl child in the context of overall social health. It stated, "Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women."

However, the recommendation remained largely on paper with most of the efforts of the government limited to ensuring enrolment and not entering critical areas of retention and gender-sensitive curricular overhaul. As a result the school education scenario still grapples with the measly record of seeing nine girls out of ten failing to complete twelve years of schooling.

It is only recently that we have begun incentivising education of the girl-child. While incentives may work as an immediate short-term measure, it will give diminishing returns. Furthermore, lack of interesting and practicum-based curricula, gender-based curricular segregation, lack of curricular flexibility, and traditional, lecture-based instruction that discourages meaningful interaction, have caused and sustained gender-imbalance in the system.

Mainstreaming of the girl-child remains as important an issue as it was a decade ago largely because the data of school enrolment does not in itself ensure or indicate continuance. While enrolment data may be accurate, our data collection mechanism does not reflect either continuance or attendance regularity. With most financial benefit schemes for the girl-child routed directly to bank accounts of beneficiaries, the issue of retention through incentives has encountered fresh challenges which policy makers of the day must address urgently. It is not rare to find economically challenged parents enrolling girls in order to reap financial benefits, while at the same time using them as earning members through child labour.

nance of girls may not serve overall societal interests. An important step in this context could be the overhaul of the curriculum to make it both gender-neutral as well as utilitarian. An examination of curricula in our schools still reveals alarming gender-stereotyping. Text-books reinforce gender segregation instead of removing it. For example, it would not be too rare to find a prose piece on a happy family showing the father as the earning member and the mother as a homemaker. A young male child is shown playing with his friends while his sister finds a place in the kitchen helping their mother.

A perusal of history books would suggest that our present has been shaped by the activities of kings and that queens played passive roles. Such content reinforces the patriarchal notion of society. Tennyson famously said in his 1847 poem, 'The Princess' that 'Man for the field and woman for the hearth/Man for the sword and for the needle she;/Man with the head and woman with the heart:/Man to command and woman to obey;/All else confusion.' Clearly, this would be a self-defeating concept when taken to the 21st century classroom. Therefore, active intervention in shaping a genuinely gender-neutral curriculum is the need of the hour.

Fortunately, India has one of the most intellectually active women's studies disciplines of the world. Crucial issues of the socio-cultural constructs of gender and their operation across a wide social spectrum have been actively researched for the last few decades. However, there has been little effective interaction between such research activities and the school-curriculum framers. This has made our school texts conceptually out-dated and poor in content with a general lack of gender sensitivity.

The writer is Assistant Professor in English, Raiganj B.ed College, West Bengal

TRIBUNE, NOV 9, 2015

Govt panel wants two-tier JEE system to go

School marks won't count

- The panel wants to end the weightage given to school marks for admissions to IITs and NITs and the CBSE's role in conducting JEE (Main)
- It has proposed to have National Testing Service by 2016 to conduct aptitude test online to test scientific prowess
- About four lakh candidates will be shortlisted through the test for taking the JEE, which will be conducted by IITs

Aditi Tandon

A government panel constituted to review the process of admission to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and National Institutes of Technology (NITs) has mooted major changes, including scrapping the existing weightage given to school marks.

The panel recently set up by the IIT Council, the top decision-making body of IITs chaired by HRD Minister Smriti Irani, has also recommended to end the current two-tier Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) regime.

The current system involves two layers of exams — the CBSE-conducted JEE (Main) for entry to NITs and other central institutions minus the IITs, and IIT-conducted JEE (Advanced) which the top 1.5 lakh merit holders of JEE (Main) take for entry to IITs.

The panel has proposed changes to the examination system from 2017. It has recommended establishment of National Testing Service by 2016 to conduct an aptitude test for screening candidates on scientific prowess and innovative thinking.

"The aptitude test may be offered two or more times in a year and would be online. This will test students' scientific thinking, which cannot be gained through coaching. Based on performance, about four lakh candidates, who take this test, shall be shortlisted for taking the JEE, which will be on the lines of the JEE (Advanced). The proposed JEE will be conducted by IITs," the panel report says, doing away with the two-tier JEE system and with the CBSE's role in conducting JEE (Main).

The report suggests that from the four lakh students, 40,000 plus will be ranked to seek admission to IITs and NITs based on a common counselling.

"IITs be requested to set up a system for developing mock JEE examinations, which will help students prepare for the JEE significantly and wean them away from the coaching industry," says the report.

The government today clarified that since the consultation process will take time, JEE 2016 will be conducted in the same manner as 2015.

ELECTIONS

BUSINESS LINE, NOV 9, 2015

Bihar and beyond

The reverberations of the Assembly election result will be felt all over the country

The landslide victory of the Grand Alliance in Bihar is significant for many reasons, not least being that it is the first big electoral setback for the BJP since its decisive win in the 2014 general election. (Delhi, despite its sense of self-importance, was not much more than a minor loss.) In optical terms, the Bihar result has dismantled the wheels of the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah election juggernaut. More importantly, it may be a political turning point by encouraging the process of the formation of a broad anti-BJP coalition of the Congress and regional parties in other parts of the country. With the coming together of the JD(U), the RJD and the Congress — three parties that ruled Bihar at one time or another — the BJP and its minor allies were always on the backfoot. It would have taken an even bigger wave than 2014 for the arithmetic of alliance to be undone by ‘charisma’ or ‘chemistry’. As it turned out, the BJP, which performed much better in terms of vote share than it did in the 2010 Assembly election, ended up with far fewer seats.

At the State level, it remains to be seen how the two unlikely allies — the JD(U) and the RJD — manage the transition from electoral victory to collaborating in the business of governance. Nitish Kumar, who will be Bihar’s chief minister for a third time, said the alliance cannot afford to slip up because of the mandate it has received — an oblique but sobering acknowledgement of the challenges of working together. But the impact of this chastening loss on the Centre is going to be even more keenly watched. It would be a pity if this election result is interpreted as a referendum on a reform process that has proceeded sometimes in a much too anxious and halting manner. That economic development and good governance were real issues in Bihar was reflected in more than one poll survey that showed Nitish Kumar as the most popular choice as chief minister. The immediate political impact will be felt in the winter session of Parliament later this month. Whether an emboldened opposition will use the victory to further block the progress of important pieces of legislation, particularly the GST, remains to be seen. But a continued hold-up of parliamentary proceedings will be both unfortunate and politically counter-productive.

The Centre and the central leadership of the BJP should also draw some political lessons from what was an extremely bitter and acrimonious election campaign — one during which sundry party motormouths, hotheads, and fringe players lent credence to the view that there was a growing climate of intolerance in the country. It is time some firm action was taken to see that the focus on a developmental agenda is not hijacked by bigotry and chauvinism. Modi did not win the 2014 election because of such elements, but he could well lose others thanks to them.

INDIAN EXPRESS, NOV 14, 2015

No Proof Required – Bihar elections: what happened and why

It was a lousy campaign. The BJP, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah ignore this reality at their peril.

The next time [BJP](#) officials say they lost big just because of electoral arithmetic, tell them that argument has as much credibility as the discredited notion of the BJP losing because of caste-based voting. (Illustration: Pradeep Yadav)

Practically the whole class failed in forecasting the Bihar assembly elections. And what a failure! It wasn't as if the pollsters missed it by a few seats here and there — what is euphemistically called “sampling error”. It was not retail error, it was wholesale. To add to the mystery of what happened, one exit poll got the results almost bang on right. The Axis poll, conducted by CNN-IBN, had forecast that the Mahagathbandhan (JDU+) would win 168-183 seats — the final tally was 178. Couldn't get it more right. However, the Axis poll was not allowed to be telecast because somebody higher up (not the editors) felt that the poll results would prove to be embarrassingly wrong for the channel.

I have followed opinion and exit polls for some 40 years in the major democracies, and for 35 years in India. I have never, ever, observed what happened at CNN-IBN — where an expensive commissioned exit poll is buried. I can understand (but don't approve of) an opinion poll being pulled because the powers-that-be feel it would sway the election. After all, even the Supreme Court believes opinion polls sway the electorate, so why can't TV owners? But an exit poll? There's nobody left to sway except the odds in the satta bazaar. I just don't get it.

If you thought it could not get murkier, it does. Today's Chanakya, which shot to fame by correctly calling the Delhi December 2013 election for the AAP (no one else was close) — and followed it up by correctly forecasting an overwhelming NDA win last year (not alone, but one among a few), sealed the fate of the JDU+ by stating in an opinion poll that the BJP+ was well ahead across a variety of indicators, but did not give a vote share or seat prediction. For that, the hidden ace up the sleeve was a bumper crop prediction for the BJP+ — in the exit poll, a seven-point vote lead and a 155-seat victory (to 83 for the JDU+). Errors are made — it happens.

But wait. Chanakya, in an attempt to preserve its reputation, claimed after all the official results were in that a simple data error caused their mammoth failure — the computer code had inadvertently switched the seats, votes, predictions, for the BJP+ with the JDU+! India is not only a nation of snake charmers, but apparently has the highest incidence of snake-oil and bridge salesmen a la George Parker — George, an American conman, conducted several sales of property he did not own, including the Brooklyn Bridge.

The best path for dealing with errors was shown by the seasoned Prannoy Roy, the pioneer in opinion and exit polls in India (along with Ashok Lahiri). He also got the exit poll grievously wrong. It happens. He didn't apologise for the error, and nor should he have. What Roy did apologise for was jumping the competitive gun and forecasting an election victory for the BJP+ (140 seats or so) on the basis of very early, mostly postal, ballots. That was a grievous error, and Roy rightly apologised for being hasty.

Opinion and exit polls have come a long way, and in my recollection, the last time they got an opinion poll so wrong was in 1991. That opinion poll was published by the ABP's Sunday magazine (Vir Sanghvi was the editor) and I was the psephologist associated with that poll. The two polls I had conducted previously — the 1989 general elections and the state polls that followed soon after — were pretty much spot on. That is, I forecast a [Congress](#) defeat in both.

But in the 1991 opinion poll, I forecast 302 seats for Rajiv Gandhi — the Congress obtained only 239. So what went wrong? Coding error?

As I explained in the article, "[Getting at the truth in opinion polls](#)" (written in August 1991), I had managed to get every state right except for two — Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These two states had newcomers in the form of Lalu Prasad and Mulayam Singh Yadav. My forecast for the Congress's seats in these two states was 66. It actually got five seats. Subtract 61 seats from 302 and one obtains 241.

Why did I get Bihar and UP so wrong and everything else so right? I believe it was lying on the part of some voters, something likely to have happened in Bihar in 2015 as well. Is there a fraction of opinion poll voters who always lie? Absolutely. But this percentage is mostly very small and not relevant for vote or seat forecasts. In any case, the translation from votes to seats causes more errors than not correctly accounting for some voters lying.

What does cause deep errors, as likely occurred with my 1991 forecast and Bihar 2015, is when people are afraid to reveal their vote and, therefore, lie. For example, the raw vote in Bihar for the Congress in 1991 was 59 per cent. After adjusting for lying, I brought down the Congress vote share to 43 per cent. In reality, the Congress got 28 per cent.

The fear of revealing their true vote can be caused by various factors. In 1991, it was most likely the fear of upper-caste retaliation (the serf against the landlord) that drove many Mandal OBCs to hide their assertion of power. In Bihar 2015, the atmosphere against the minorities was so bad that many Muslims and Dalits felt secure in hiding their vote from the pro-establishment pollsters.

A repeat of the 2014 [Lok Sabha](#) vote shares meant that the JDU+ would get 45 per cent and the BJP+ 40 per cent — a five-point gap. The vote count for Bihar 2015 — the JDU+ got 41.9 and

the BJP+ 34.1 per cent — shows a 7.8 percentage point gap. In 2014, 20 per cent of Muslims, who constitute 17 per cent of the Bihar population, are believed to have voted for the NDA. According to the accurate Axis poll, only 3 per cent of Muslims are believed to have voted for the NDA in Bihar in 2015. In other words, if the Muslims had just voted as in 2014, the BJP+ vote share would have been 2.9 percentage points higher (17 percentage point decline associated with 17 per cent of the population) at 37 per cent. The JDU+ would have got 2.9 percentage points less, or 39 per cent, that is, instead of the vote gap being 7.8 percentage points, it would have been only 2 percentage points, or 102 seats for the BJP+ versus 125 for the JDU+.

So the next time BJP officials say they lost big just because of electoral arithmetic, tell them that argument has as much credibility as the discredited notion of the BJP losing because of caste-based voting. The BJP lost big because of their divisive campaign, whose purpose was to instil fear among those not preordained to vote for them. It was a lousy political campaign and the BJP, [Narendra Modi](#) and Amit Shah ignore this reality at their present (and future) peril.

The writer is chairman, Oxus Investments and contributing editor, '[The Indian Express](#)'

HEALTH SERVICES

STATESMAN, NOV 9, 2015

Patient's right to know

Anupriyo Mallick

Medical care is based on implicit faith and trust between patient and doctor. Controversies over medical, ethical or legal issues can hamper the effectiveness of the treatment. The patient and his family ought to be aware of rights as well as responsibilities. The patient's rights are the healthcare provider's responsibility and vice-versa.

The concept of patient's rights emerges from the principle of autonomy and self-determination enshrined as the Right to Life in the Constitution. With special reference to the doctor-patient equation, it recognizes the vulnerability of the patient and seeks to address this inequality. The standards of ethical practice and behaviour are prescribed for the doctor; the patient's rights seek to ensure that he can have some say in his treatment-options and health plan. This ensures that his patient's physical, emotional and psychological integrity is upheld and respected. Regretfully, this understanding is never taken seriously and in extreme cases it is often blatantly violated.

There are numerous instances of doctors not explaining to the patient the diagnosis, the treatment planned, or expected prognosis. However, not providing such information to patients is a clear violation of their rights and this is now happening almost regularly.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights grants the right to life, liberty and security. Additionally, we also have the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and the "right to

support during the period of illness, disability, unemployment etc”. The Declaration recognizes “the inherent dignity” and the “equal and unalienable rights of all members of the human family” (Preamble). In general terms, this implies that all humans, irrespective of gender, age, education, state of health or economic condition enjoy these rights. It is on the basis of these rights that the entitlements of patients are based.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines patients’ rights as those owed to him as a human being by physicians and by the State. The rights vary from country to country and are influenced by the patient’s status, family, society and country-related factors. There is a stark difference between such rights in the USA and India. In 2002, the Medical Council of India published a Code of Ethics Regulations (COER) which deals with the duties and responsibilities of physicians in addition to certain rights of patients. It must be emphasised that this code does not represent patients’ rights; those mentioned are incidental to the duties and responsibilities of physicians. A distinction must therefore be made between a duty-centric approach as represented by the COER and the rights-centric approach of the AAPS. A medical professional may have issues with the rights-centric approach of AAPS, but is dutybound to uphold the rights of patients that are incidental to his/her duties. At the time of registration with the Medical Council of India (MCI), all medical practitioners are required to sign a declaration in Appendix I - “I shall abide by the code of medical ethics as enunciated in the Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations 2002.” (Appendix 1, Declaration, clause K) .The Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI) has a more comprehensive charter on its website listing specific rights of patients.

If the rights are violated, the patients have the only option to approach the consumer courts. Violation of patients’ rights is not a cognizable offence in India as it is in the USA and some other countries. You have the right to be told all the facts about your illness; to have your medical records explained to you; and to be made aware of risks and side-effects, if any, of the treatment prescribed. Do not hesitate to question your doctor about any of these aspects.

Physicians and surgeons rarely have the time or the inclination to discuss with the patient the diagnosis, the treatment or the prognosis. If the physician is inclined to do so, the close relatives may attempt to keep the patient in the dark. There is little awareness of the fact that the patient’s anxiety can increase in the absence of definite information. This may be particularly true in the case of critical problems such as cancer. In many cases the patient or relatives may not understand the modalities of treatment; the physicians are seldom keen to discuss this with them.

The COER does address this issue, as it enjoins all physicians to provide factual information to patients and their relatives. The physician should neither exaggerate nor minimize the gravity of a patient’s condition. He should ensure that the patient, his relatives or his friends are informed

to “serve the best interests of the patient and the family”. However, the best interest is often a controversial issue and cannot be the same for all patients.

During a physical examination, the patient must be handled with consideration and due regard for modesty. This right is usually respected, and physicians do their best to protect the patient from undue exposure. Most doctors also empathise with their patients and show due consideration. Patients are respected and treated with great care as a norm, yet, as an exception, violation of this right cannot be ruled out. However, this is not specifically mentioned in the COER.

You have a right to know your doctor’s qualifications. If you cannot evaluate them yourself, do not hesitate to ask someone who can. The COER requires that doctors provide this information without being requested to do so. It states that physicians shall display as suffix to their names only recognised medical degrees or such certificates/diplomas and memberships/honours which confer professional knowledge or recognises any special qualification/achievements. If you are doubtful about the treatment prescribed and especially an operation suggested, you have a right to get a second opinion from any specialist. However, should a patient seek a second opinion, and if the same turns out to be radically different from the first, the patient is in a quandary as to which opinion to accept. The COER supports the right of the patient to take a second opinion, but adds: “Differences of opinion should not be divulged unnecessarily but when there is irreconcilable difference of opinion the circumstances should be frankly and impartially explained to the patient or his relatives or friends. It would be open to them to seek further advice as they so desire.”

You have a right to be told in advance what an operation is for and the possible risks involved. If this is not possible because of your being unconscious or for some other reasons, your nearest relatives must be told before they give their consent to the operation. There are multiple therapeutic options for some disorders. Unless there is a clear-cut advantage of one option over another, the patient should be given a choice of options. The benefit of saving a life should be carefully balanced against the possible economic ruin of the family. The patient has the right to get the case papers on request.

The attitude of the physician is a decisive factor in the matter of patients’ rights. There are highly qualified physicians who share all information with the patient, but they are in a minority. Unfortunately, these rights are yet to be fully recognised by the medical fraternity.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TRIBUNE, NOV 13, 2015

India, UK ink nuclear pact

Modi raises terror in British House, speaks up against intolerance

First rupee bond in London soon

- British Prime Minister David Cameron reiterated his country's support for India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council
- Cameron said he wanted to make London the centre for off-shore rupee trading with the launch of 1-billion worth of bonds, including the first rupee-denominated bond
- Modi also highlighted India's plan to use London as a financial base for fundraising and the launch of railway rupee bond in London

India and the United Kingdom today signed deals worth 9-billion pound as they inked a civil nuclear pact and decided to collaborate in defence and cyber security, besides launching a railway rupee bond in London market.

The decisions were announced during a joint press interaction by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart David Cameron here after their 90-minute wide-ranging talks at 10 Downing Street.

“The conclusion of the civil nuclear agreement is a symbol of our mutual trust and our resolve to combat climate change,” Modi said while issuing a joint statement. “The agreement for cooperation in India's Global Centre for Clean Energy Partnerships will strengthen safety and security in the global nuclear industry,” he said.

Modi, who flew into the British capital on his much- anticipated three-day visit, was accorded a guard of honour by the 48-member F Company Scots guard accompanied by the regimental band of Irish guards.

Cameron described the Indo-UK relations as a “new dynamic modern partnership” and reiterated his country's support for India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council. “We want to become the number one partners to finance the immense economic vision Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi and make London the centre for off-shore rupee trading with the launch of 1-billion worth of bonds including the first government-backed rupee denominated bond,” Cameron added.

"We want to forge a more ambitious, modern partnership," he added, noting that India has more investments in Britain than in the rest of the European Union combined.

Modi highlighted plans for India to use London as a financial base for fundraising.

“We are going to use the London market for fundraising even more and I am happy to announced that we are set to launch a railway rupee bond in London. It is appropriate as the journey of Indian Railways started in the UK,” Modi said.

Later, addressing MPs in British Parliament's Royal Gallery, Modi, who is the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the UK in 10 years, said the world must speak in one voice and act in unison to combat terrorism, calling it a "challenge of our times.”

Dwelling on terrorism among other subjects during his 25-minute speech, Modi said there should be no distinction between terrorist groups or discrimination between nations. — Agencies

LIBRARIES

HINDUSTAN TIMES, NOV 8, 2015

MC starts renovation at Children's Park library

Harshraj Singh

After shifting its main library to Guru Nanak Dev Bhawan, the municipal corporation (MC) is now going to upgrade its library at Children's Park. The library would offer books of different languages, including Punjabi, Hindi and English, to children of different age groups.

Finally after a long time, the renovation work at the library has been started by the MC. It was learnt that colourful paint is being done on the library walls to attract children.

MC commissioner GK Singh Dhaliwal said they were going to purchase books worth `1 lakh for children. "The books will be based on children literature, stories and short stories, general knowledge, current affairs, atlas, languages and others," he said.

He said, "We are going to install seven new tables, and each table can be shared by four children. The MC will also purchase new furniture. The books will be upgraded timely as per demand of the children."

"I visited the library to check the ongoing renovation. I hope that renovated library with new books will be inaugurated by November 20. All the parents should inspire their children to read books," he said.

The main motive behind the renovating this library is to attract children to adopt reading as a hobby. The MC will also motivate children to visit the library where magazines on current affairs and other subjects as well as newspapers would also be available.

Earlier, the MC wanted to inaugurate the renovated library on the occasion of Children's Day that falls on November 14, but now it will get delayed for a week, as the process to purchase new furniture is underway. A college student, Satbir Singh, said, "Many students in the government schools cannot afford books for competitive exams due to poor financial condition of their homes. I wanted the MC to arrange such competitive books at all its libraries, so that the students from economically weaker sections can read these books. The MC should also do publicity about the books available, so that the needy students can also get benefit from this library."

POLITICAL PARTIES

DECCAN HERALD, NOV 13, 2015

Veterans' revolt, a lesson for BJP

The revolt by four senior most leaders of the BJP – L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Shanta Kumar and Yashwant Sinha – against the party leadership may appear opportunistic to some. But the issues they have raised and the points they have made are right and relevant, and could not have been articulated convincingly before the party's massive defeat in the Bihar elections. The statement issued by the veterans is very strongly worded, and is an indictment of the leadership, which is in effect only Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president Amit Shah. The leadership has been saying that the Bihar defeat is a collective failure. But the senior leaders view it as an evasion of responsibility and a way of saying that no one is responsible. They have seen a destruction of the "consensual character" of the BJP, which is 'being forced to kow-tow to a handful' and has, as a result, been 'emasculated'.

It is known that the BJP has changed much after the ascendancy of Modi at the Centre and the takeover of the party organisation by him and his trusted lieutenant Amit Shah. It is a highly centralised organisation now with decisions taken only by two or three leaders at the top. In the case of Bihar elections, every important decision was taken at the top and the state leaders did not have much of a role other than acting and working according to the diktats from above. The BJP has not been a centralised party. Its organisation has functioned more democratically than some other parties, and as a result it had strong state leaders like Modi himself or others like Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Raman Singh and Manohar Parrikar. This tradition and culture is in danger now. Modi's style of governance is to centralise power and decisions. Amit Shah has adopted that style in the organisation. This robs the party of dynamism and weakens it, as the veterans have noted.

The four leaders' view is shared by many others in the party. Some of them have expressed it openly but most would not make it public out of caution, fear or a sense of discipline. Union minister Nitin Gadkari's defence of the leadership and his demand for action against the senior

leaders show how most leaders would respond to the veterans' criticism. The four senior leaders have been sidelined for long and they do not have to lose anything by criticising the party. But they carry more credibility than Amit Shah for most followers of the party, and many would consider that they have done a service to the party.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

HINDU, NOV 9, 2015

Two-thirds majority for Nitish-Lalu Grand Alliance

SMITA GUPTA

WHAT THE RESULT MEANS

- Reform agenda:** A huge blow to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reform plans as the Opposition will stall key legislation. The Winter session of Parliament later this month is likely to be washed out.
- National politics:** A loose non-Congress alliance of Nitish Kumar-Mamata Banerjee-Arvind Kejriwal could become the key political rival to Modi. While the Congress finds itself on the winning side after a long time, it is not yet the pre-eminent opposition to the BJP.
- BJP:** Amit Shah's party leadership could come under attack, and he could become a proxy for party rivals to attack Mr. Modi's autocratic leadership style.
- Government:** A Cabinet reshuffle could happen soon.
- Brand Modi:** How will Mr. Modi reinvent himself now that it has been emphatically proved that he is not invincible? Dissent within the party could rapidly grow in coming days.

Vote share and seats won	
Grand Alliance	
RJD	80
JD(U)	71
INC	27
NDA	
BJP	53
LJP	2
RLSP	2
HAM(S)	1
Others	7
TOTAL	243

A VICTORY TO SAVOUR: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar embraces RJD chief Lalu Prasad in Patna on Sunday. — PHOTO: RANJEET KUMAR

Assembly polls: The focus now shifts to the communally sensitive Uttar Pradesh, which is set to go to the polls in 2017

Gauge Chart Data:

- Grand Alliance: 178
- NDA: 58
- Others: 7

As the Nitish Kumar-Lalu Prasad duo led the Grand Alliance on Sunday to a historic, thumping two-thirds majority, even reviving its junior partner, the Congress, the BJP-led NDA bit the dust — and the curtain came down on what must rate as one of the most bitterly fought Assembly elections in Bihar.

Conscious that this victory would resonate through the country, influencing politics in other parts, Chief Minister and JD (U) leader Nitish Kumar — composed but clearly moved by the extent of the mandate — said: “The Bihar 2015 poll will always be remembered as a milestone in the electoral politics of the State; it reflected the national mood.”

Mr. Kumar said the poll would be remembered as one where the “party at the Centre had put all its resources into an Assembly election.”

Lalu Prasad, Rashtriya Janata Dal chief, has proved to be the kingmaker, providing both the mass support for the coalition and a sharp aggression at the stumps, countering Prime Minister Narendra Modi at every stage. Mr. Kumar lived up to his reputation of being a “Chanakya”: he retained his chief ministership, while helping old comrade Lalu Prasad return to the centre stage after many years in the political wilderness. In 1990, too, when Mr. Prasad became Chief Minister for the first time, Mr. Kumar’s role in that victory had earned him the sobriquet “Chanakya” of Bihar politics.

On Sunday evening, while the flamboyant Mr. Prasad, whose personal exit poll of 190 came closest to the results, threw open the gates of 10, Circular Road to the surging crowds, three houses down, the more reticent Mr. Kumar, after his press conferences, met party workers who milled around him, before walking onto the road outside. There he stood on a small wooden platform to accept more congratulations.

The decisive victory ensures that government formation will be smooth. Mr. Kumar said that first his party legislators would meet, and then all the coalition MLAs would meet to settle the issue of portfolios. To a question whether one of Mr. Prasad’s sons would be his Deputy Chief Minister, he said the press conference was not an appropriate forum to discuss the matter. The swearing-in ceremony is likely to be after Diwali.

At two post-victory press conferences, one at the RJD office followed by the other at the Chief Minister’s official residence, where the Congress’s Ashok Chowdhury, too, was present, Mr. Prasad underscored the fact that regardless of the numbers the two parties notched up, Mr. Kumar would be the Chief Minister.

Mr. Kumar called for an end to the bitterness, negativity and rancour that marked the election.

BUSINESS LINE, NOV 14, 2015

Nitish to take oath as Bihar CM on November 20

Nitish Kumar, who along with RJD chief Lalu Prasad, steered the Grand Secular Alliance to a landslide mandate of over two-thirds majority in Bihar assembly poll, will be sworn in as Chief Minister on November 20 for a third term along with his new cabinet.

Kumar, who was elected the leader of the Grand Alliance legislature party leader paving the way for his becoming the CM, told reporters outside Raj Bhawan after meeting Governor Ram Nath Kovind that he will take oath as Chief Minister on November 20 at 2 PM at Gandhi Maidan here.

Emerging from Raj Bhawan after about a 45 minute meeting, he said all the three parties of the alliance — JD(U), RJD and Congress would be part of his new cabinet.

In reply to a question by newsmen as to how many ministers would take oath with him on November 20, Kumar merely said the maximum limit for Bihar House was fixed at 36.

Asked if Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP veteran L K Advani would be invited to the oath-taking function, Kumar said these matters “would be decided in due course and the media would be informed.”

Kumar was earlier elected the Allaince’s legislature party leader at its meeting and he later met the Governor staking claim to form government.

Lalu Prasad, his JD(U) counterpart Sharad Yadav, Congress General Secretary C P Joshi, JD(U) General Secretary K C Tyagi and state presidents of JD(U), RJD and Congress Basistha Narayan Singh, Ramchandra Purve and Ashok Choudhary respectively accompanied Kumar to the meeting with the Governor.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

STATESMAN, NOV 13, 2015

President assent to Haryana's cow protection Bill

President Pranab Mukherjee has given assent to Haryana's cow slaughter Bill which was passed by the state Assembly earlier this year, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said today.

With the 'Gauvansh Sanrakshan and Gausamvardhan Bill' turning into a law, cow slaughter in Haryana will now attract a rigorous imprisonment ranging from three years to 10 years.

"The bill has come into force in the form of a law with immediate effect," Khattar said.

He was speaking on the sidelines of a function organised by 'Vishwakarma Sabha Haryana' on the occasion of Vishwakarma Diwas at Meham in Rohtak district, according to an official release.

Khattar said that under the provisions of the new law, cow trafficking, slaughtering and eating beef are banned in the state.

"Many states have congratulated Haryana for this initiative," he said.

Notably, for "protection and upkeep" of cows, Haryana Assembly had in March this year passed the Bill which clamps a complete ban on cow slaughter in the state and provides for a rigorous imprisonment ranging from three years to ten years for killing the animal.

Earlier, Khattar announced a slew of incentives for the people of Meham during his first visit to the area after becoming Chief Minister over a year back.

The chief minister announced a HUDA Sector and construction of affordable houses for the people of the area under Affordable Housing Scheme of the state government.

He said HUDA Sector would be developed at Meham and as per the demand of the people of the area, four storey houses would be constructed under Affordable Housing Scheme at a rate of Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000 per square feet

He said that the state government has a target of construction of one lakh affordable houses in Haryana by 2022.

TAXATION

TIMES OF INDIA, NOV 10, 2015

Government plans tax benefits for house owners, tenants

[Dipak K Dash](#)

NEW DELHI: In a move to push rental housing in urban areas to meet the growing need of migrant population on the lines of other countries, the government has proposed to give both direct and indirect tax relief to house owners and tenants as well by Centre, states and local governments.

The draft Rental Housing Policy has proposed this based on the fact that renting of homes is treated as a "commercial" activity which increases property tax for individuals and service taxes for institutional rental housing operators such as hostels/ PGs and dormitories wherein electricity and utility rates are calculated at par with commercial properties and thereby reducing the rental yield. "Higher outflow due to commercial treatment deters the growth of rental housing," the report says, which has been circulated to states for their feedback.

The report also mentions that the Income Tax Act provides exemption of tax deduction for house rent allowance (HRA) for an employee, which is around 40% on the basic salary. "It is estimated that the urban poor might be paying monthly 30% of their income as house rent without any incentives. The share is much higher in the case of people with less salary in comparison to those who are better paid," a ministry official said.

Arguing for putting in place a robust Rental Housing Policy, the document has suggested different "need based rental housing" models to address diverse housing needs for various segments of the population such as students, working men/ women, construction workers and migrants. These can be owned by individuals, private players, companies and government.

For example, it says that providing housing-to-all on ownership basis is difficult or may not be

feasible despite the fact that for governments at Centre affordable housing has been a priority area. Even after taking several initiatives such as subsidies for housing loans and tax concessions the poor cannot afford to own a house due to low disposable and irregular income. And hence there is need to have a separate model for this group.

Considering the fact that poor and those with little income may not be able to pay rent, the policy recommends that states or urban local bodies can incentivize poor owners and tenants through subsidies and tax incentives or rental vouchers. The vouchers provided to urban poor can be used to top up the rent they are paying to move into a habitable space.

The draft policy also highlights that while there is huge housing shortage in urban areas, there are massive stocks of vacant houses. According to the 2011 Census, 11.09 million houses are vacant in urban areas. "While exact reasons for the vacant properties are hard to ascertain it is felt that low rental yield, fear of repossession, lack of incentives etc. are the possible reasons. If these vacant houses are made available for rental housing, then some, if not most of the urban housing shortage, could be addressed."

The policy suggests to states to recognize that many urban households live in rental and shared housing, and hence they should consider renting to be one of the various ways to improve housing condition. Some of the recommendations include estimating the number of rental households and landlords, setting up of a cheap arbitration and conciliation service for landlords and tenants that works quickly and facilitate online registration of rental properties, property dealers working in informal sector, grievance redressal system.

BUSINESS LINE, NOV 14, 2015

Income Tax dept developing mobile app for filing returns

Income Tax department is developing a mobile app which can be used by users for filing their tax returns, a top finance ministry official said on Saturday.

"We are developing a mobile app which can be used by users for filing their income tax returns. There are some security related issues, which we will resolve soon," Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairperson Anita Kapoor said today after inaugurating 'Taxpayers' Lounge' at the India International Trade Fair (IITF) here.

Online filing of tax returns has caught up in a big way in recent years, while filings through mobile apps can make it even easier for the taxpayers.

Talking about direct tax collections, Kapoor said, "Collections are doing well and we are keeping our fingers crossed. The December collection of advance tax will actually give us a good idea."

The government aims to collect Rs 7.98 lakh crore as direct tax in the current financial year.

The CBDT Chairperson said the high-level committee under former High Court Judge R V Easwar, formed to simplify income tax laws, will submit its first report by January next year.

“The panel has clear terms of reference. They are expected to give their first report in January. They can give it earlier if they deem it proper. They have sufficient time,” she said.