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BLACK MONEY

Dealing with black money

The worth of the new, stringent law against Indians stashing away unaccounted money in foreign destinations cannot be judged by the quantum of assets disclosed within the compliance window that ended on September 30. Assets worth Rs. 4,147 crore, yielding tax to the tune of Rs.2,488 crore, were disclosed within the deadline. If one believes that fabulous sums lie in safe havens abroad, untouched by Indian law, the amount may seem woefully inadequate. On the other hand, if one believes that much of the black money resides comfortably in India, and undisclosed income in foreign countries represent only a small fraction of the total, it may seem a significant disclosure. In any case, the figure falls short of the Rs. 6,500 crore cited by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address. The stage is now set for the provisions of the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 to be invoked against defaulters who failed to make use of the compliance window. The true test of the efficacy of the enactment will be two-fold: in its ability to deter any further flight of money to offshore destinations in the belief that tax can be evaded that way, and in the rigour with which investigation and prosecution are pursued against those who still hold assets abroad. Any undisclosed foreign income that is detected will henceforth attract tax at the rate of 30 per cent, a penalty of 90 per cent and a 10-year prison term. With new arrangements in place to share tax-related information among many countries, this will surely have some deterrence value.

However, what ought to be of concern to the public is a fact that Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has also highlighted: the bulk of the black money is within India. A confidential report by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy on the true extent of India's parallel economy quantified it in 2013 at 75 per cent of GDP. The black economy is powered mainly by the higher education, real estate and mining sectors. The report had spoken of capitation fees contributing Rs. 5,953 crore to the black money component in a particular year, while real estate transactions could have generated Rs. 5,68,879 crore. In recent times, letting money idle in tax havens, which offer safety and confidentiality but not much by way of interest income, is no more the norm. Assets held abroad find their way back to India as investments in business and participatory notes in the market. The real challenge is in having a regulatory regime that promotes tax compliance and income disclosure. Preventing black money accumulation may be more important than even unearthing it.

CIVIL SERVICE

Home secretary post vacant for weeks as bureaucrats stay away

The bureaucrats are reportedly wary of being caught in the cross-fire in the endless feud between the Delhi government and the Centre

It was once considered to be one of the most coveted bureaucratic posts in the capital. Today, the crucial post of home secretary in the Delhi government has been vacant for nearly three weeks, as there are reportedly not too many takers for it.

Home Secretary S N Sahai is away for a month and will resume charge in November. While several senior bureaucrats were asked to become the acting home secretary in the interim period, all of them categorically refused, said sources.

The bureaucrats are reportedly wary of being caught in the cross-fire in the endless feud between the Delhi government and the Centre, said sources. The home secretary will have to avoid over-ruling the directives of the Delhi government while following the instructions of the Lt Governor at the same time, they said.

"The pressure on home secretary will be enormous….. not following orders can make some very powerful people your enemy," said a senior bureaucrat.

While junior officers have been directly sending files to the minister concerned, most matters related to governance need a final approval from the home secretary.

Names of some candidates, including that of transport commissioner Parimal Rai, have been sent to the Lt Governor and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for approval, said sources.

STATESMAN, OCT 15, 2015
Compulsory exit
Saumitra Mohan

The idea of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' has been in circulation for a while, especially in the wake of the BJP government's pledge to ensure that the concept attains fruition across the country. Any attempt to improve is incomplete without a matching effort to streamline the permanent executive, pre-eminently the civil services. But India's proverbial steel frame has allegedly become rusted and rickety, and this is largely because of its failure to adjust to the changing praxis of development.

Even if policy changes are made with corresponding initiatives, all of them would not be effective if the implementing agencies are not adequately and suitably equipped to respond to the challenges. As the quality of governance depends on the quality of its executive arm, it is here that the bureaucracy is alleged to have performed short of expectations. Governments at the Centre and in the states have attempted periodic administrative reforms. As part of such initiatives to enhance the standard of public service, weeding out of the inefficient or venal bureaucrats has been high on the agenda. Guidelines are reported to have been issued by the Centre to the Ministries and departments to "compulsorily retire people who don't meet required standards of work or probity".

Compulsory retirement, when legally challenged, has in principle been approved by the Supreme Court. In a 1980 judgment, it ruled that compulsory retirement "is undoubtedly in public interest and is not passed by way of punishment". This was later reinforced by a cognate judgment supporting the idea of dropping an official in public interest.

Therefore, at least on paper, the bureaucracy does not have a secure job. The previous government at the Centre even amended the All India Service Rules to provide for compulsory retirement of below-par bureaucrats just after 15 years of service in keeping with the Sixth Pay Commission's recommendation. However, one has not known of any compulsory retirement. Many observers do find compulsory retirement to be a desirable tool in ensuring the efficacy and efficiency of the civil service. In any system of

governance, performance is often determined by the set of incentives provided to the people who exercise power. However, many feel that in a developing country like India, where bureaucrats wield enormous power, a guaranteed job provides the wrong incentive. The concept of 'compulsory retirement' for the inefficient and invalid officers is laudable in itself. The devil lies in the detail. How is one going to ensure the exit of the truly inefficient and ineffective officials? How shall they be identified? Would the assessment system be the basis of identifying the officers to be retired? The present performance appraisal system, known as 'Annual Confidential Report (ACR)', is a subjective assessment and is definitely not fool-proof. Such a system can target and victimize officers, for instance Sanjeev Chaturvedi and Ashok Khemka, who don't kowtow to the powers that be.

Before shortlisting officers for 'compulsory retirement', the government must ensure the objective assessment of a particular officer by an independent panel whose neutrality is unquestionable. Of course, if it is an entity handpicked by the ruling dispensation, its members will very probably just sign on the dotted line. Hence, a mechanism needs to be evolved to ensure that we don't lose our best officers to the byzantine politicking in the portals of power. Co-opting a leader of the Opposition and a Judge of the Supreme Court or High Court in the panel may be a good idea to pre-empt the victimisation of efficient officers.

Again, circumstances and conditions of working also need to be factored in before taking a call on compulsory retirement. Many officers have complained that they are often expected to run towards an impossible target with their hands and feet tied. So even while you expect an officer to deliver, he may be deterred by undesirable interference or by an inefficient team which does not allow him to function effectively.

While the proposal relates to the All India Services - IAS, IPS and IFS - it ought to be applicable to all categories of officers and staff in order to ensure collective accountability. Their performance, in good measure, is dependent on the performance of other officials and staff from various services. They definitely provide the leadership in their respective domains, but targeting merely the AIS officers will not benefit the system overall.

If India is marching forward, the positive role of the bureaucracy cannot be denied, demeaned or disputed. There should be incentives for performers. Otherwise, the government runs the risk of losing them to the private sector. Treating the hare and the

tortoise on the same footing does not make sense. So, a well-structured system of incentives is warranted to sustain the efficiency of the civil services.

The government should not limit its action-plan to compulsory retirement. It should also act on proposals as mooted by the last three Pay Commissions to peg a bureaucrat's salary to performance. Unless there is a system of differentiated pay linked to performance, the work culture will not improve. The Sixth Pay Commission had suggested an independent external agency to evaluate the performance of bureaucrats with the aim of linking overall payment to their performance.

Conversely, one of the Pay Commissions had also recommended that under-performers be denied normal increment. Both suggestions must be thoroughly discussed in the interest of putting in place an efficient and delivery-oriented superior and subordinate civil service. Twenty-first century India certainly deserves more than the mere continuation of a colonial-style bureaucracy.

From the perspective of fiscal policy, such issues as the government's pay-structure and work environment warrant reform. A huge chunk of the annual budget is earmarked for salaries and pensions of a behemoth bureaucracy. Only the residual amount is used for development. Making them accountable and getting more out of civil servants is an essential element of the proposed administrative reform. The system of incentivising the entire governance and delivery mechanism also calls for reflection.

The government must act on the tasks it has set out if it wants to execute its development agenda. However, a well-thought out human resource policy in keeping with the developmental priorities of an aspiring India is urgently imperative. Unless this happens, there will be instances of abuse of power or indifference towards responsibilities. Given the support for the idea, the Government definitely needs to go ahead to effect the proposal on the anvil.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, OCT 12, 2015
Govt may miss PM's deadline to empanel non-IAS central services
 Aloke Tikku

The government may miss the December-end deadline set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to empanel officers of Group A services to hold joint secretary (JS) posts in central ministries and departments.

In June, Modi had directed cadre-controlling authorities of the three-dozen services allowed to hold senior posts at central ministries to complete the empanelment process for all officers up to the 1995 batch as soon as possible.

The deadline of December 31 was also fixed to complete the process.

If implemented, the decision would have helped tide over a shortage of civil servants willing to serve at the Centre at the JS-level.

It is not that there is a real shortage of officers, particularly from among the non-IAS services, but the IAS lobby that mans all top posts faces accusations that it used the empanelment process as a glass ceiling to create artificial shortage.

In principle, the empanelment process was introduced in the seventies to ensure that only the best officers were able to compete for a slot in central ministries.

In practice, however, it became another instrument to ensure that officers from non-IAS services stayed out. This was done by slowing down the empanelment for non-IAS services.

So, if a 1990 revenue or forest service officer wants to join the Centre, he will have to work as a director because the batch has not been empanelled as a JS. And an IAS officer — seven years his junior — could be his boss.

A revenue service official who joined a central ministry in the hope that he too would move up the hierarchy said there were vested interests at play, a reference to the IAS lobby.

A common excuse cited to explain the delay in empanelment was that they were slow to complete the necessary formalities. But a forest service officer insisted this was a "ruse", asking how the IAS-led bureaucracy was so efficient to complete their paperwork, but not other services.

Officials said the artificial shortage of JS-level officers would continue since there was no way that the Centre would be able to complete empanelment of hundreds of officers. In the past three months, only 170-odd non-IAS officers have been empanelled.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 13, 2015
Over 15,000 qualify in civil services prelims exam: UPSC

An aspirant going to appear UPSC civil services (preliminary) examination-2015 at a centre (Maris Stella College) in Vijayawada.

NEW DELHI: Over 15,000 people have qualified in this year's civil services preliminary examination, results of which were declared today by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

"A total of 15,008 candidates have qualified in the preliminary examination," UPSC Secretary Ashim Khurana told PTI.

As against a record number of 9,45,908 candidates who have applied for the exam, about 4.63 lakh had sat in the test on August 23, which is about 49 per cent of the total applicants.

"The results of the preliminary exam were declared within 50 days of conducting the exam. It is the shortest ever duration in which the results were declared," Khurana said.

For the 2014 exam, the results were declared in 51 days.

All the qualified candidates are advised to fill up the Detailed Application Form online for civil services (main) examination, to be held from December 18, 2015, a statement issued by the UPSC said.

The civil services examination is conducted by the UPSC annually in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- to select officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

The preliminary examination consists of two papers -- Paper I and Paper II of two hours duration each. There were 2,186 venues in 71 centres (or cities) across the country.

The Commission has a facilitation counter near the examination hall building in its campus here. Candidates may obtain any information or clarification regarding their result of the examination on all working days between 10 AM to 5 PM, in person or on Tel No 011-23385271, 011-23098543 or 011-23381125.

Candidates can also obtain information regarding their result by accessing Union Public Service Commission website -- www.upsc.gov.in.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 13, 2015
Two-day RTI programme for newly-appointed Assistant Secretaries

NEW DELHI: All of the over 150 newly-appointed assistant secretaries will attend a two-day programme beginning Friday on Right to Information Act.

"All the Assistant Secretaries posted in various ministries or departments are informed that a two-day programme titled 'RTI: Outlook for the Future' is scheduled to be organised on October 16 and 17," an order issued by Department of Personnel and Training said.

All the assistant secretaries are requested to attend the programme on both the days, it added.

As many as 158 new IAS officers were in August appointed as assistant secretaries in different ministries here as part of a first-of-its-kind initiative by the Union government to groom these bureaucrats at the Centre before they move out to their respective state cadres.

These officers of the 2013-batch have started their career from Delhi, instead of cadre states allocated to them, on central deputation for three months beginning August 31.

It is for the first time that the Centre has created the new post of Assistant Secretary for the young officers.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 8, 2015
Do away with job interview for junior posts: Centre to CMs

Chief Ministers of all states have been asked to do away with the practice of interviews for identified junior-level posts to curb corruption and substantially ease the problems of the poor and resourceless aspirants.

NEW DELHI: Chief Ministers of all states have been asked to do away with the practice of interviews for identified junior-level posts to curb corruption and substantially ease the problems of the poor and resourceless aspirants.

Union Minister for Personnel Jitendra Singh has written a letter to all chief ministers in this regard asking them to identify such posts from where the process of interview can be abolished.

The move comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had put forward such a suggestion during his Independence Day address to the nation this year.

As a prompt follow-up to the Prime Minister's suggestion, the Personnel Ministry had earlier sent a communication to chief secretaries of all states. Now, Singh has written

separate letters to all the chief ministers requesting them to lead this initiative in their respective states.

"The government's view is that the interviews should be discontinued for recruitment to junior level posts where personality or skill assessment is not absolutely required.

"The objective behind abolition of interviews for such posts is that it will curb corruption, ensure more objective selection in a transparent manner and substantially ease the problems of the poor and resourceless aspirants," said Singh, Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

This will not only enable giving more weightage to merit but also supplement the government's resolve for 'maximum governance, minimum government', he said.

In the letter, Singh has informed that several Group 'B' (Non-Gazetted) and Group 'C' (Non-Technical) in various ministries and other organisations under central government have already been identified where the selections can be made through a competitive examination without interview.

Chief Ministers have been requested to involve the Public Service Commission and other recruiting agencies in their respective states where interview can be discontinued and selection can be done only through examination. This would be a major step towards achieving the goal of citizen-centric transparent governance, the Minister said.

The Ministry had in past 16 months undertaken several "path-breaking" decisions including abolition of attestation of certificates and instead introduced self-attestation, introduction of a pension portal to abolish the requirement for a written life-certificate and decision to revisit and revise the pattern and syllabus of civil services examination, he said.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 8, 2015
Government curtails senior officer's tenure in NTRO

The tenure of a senior officer in National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), a technical intelligence agency, was today restricted by over two years, without citing any reasons

NEW DELHI: The tenure of a senior officer in National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), a technical intelligence agency, was today restricted by over two years, without citing any reasons.

The Appointments Committee of Cabinet has approved the proposal for restricting central deputation tenure of Ashwani Kumar Sonik, a 1986 batch officer of Indian Railway Personnel Service, as Controller (Administration) and Joint Secretary in the NTRO for a period up to March 31, 2016, instead of a period up to June 10, 2018, an

order issued by Department of Personnel and Training said without giving any reason.

In another order, the ACC has reiterated its earlier decision of restricting central deputation tenure of Narendra Bhooshan, working as Mission Director, National Food Security Mission (NFSM), up to July 10, 2016.

It has been observed that the ACC had earlier taken a conscious decision to restrict the tenure of appointment of Bhooshan to the post pending formulation of recruitment rules. The ACC has accordingly approved reiteration of its earlier decision that extension of his central deputation period be restricted up to July 10, next year, the order said.

Bhooshan, a 1992 batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, was appointed to the post in June this year.

The NFSM was launched in October 2007 and it envisages additional production of 25 million tonnes of food grains during 12th Five Year Plan -- 2012-17.

The ACC has approved appointment of IFS officer Thanglura Darlong as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in South Asian University here for three years.

Darlong is a 1988 batch Indian Foreign Service officer.

The South Asian University has been established by eight member nations of South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC)--India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The university, which started its operations from the academic year 2010, offers post-graduate and doctoral programmes in various disciplines including development economics, computer science, biotechnology, mathematics, sociology, international relations and law.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 8, 2015
Panel's report on civil services exam pattern in six months

The civil service examination is conducted by Union Public Service Commission annually in three stages - preliminary, main and interview.

NEW DELHI: An expert committee formed by the government to examine various issues related to age relaxation, eligibility, syllabus and pattern of civil services examination, to select IAS and IPS officers, will give its report within six months time.

It will also review the effectiveness of the existing scheme of the prestigious test in selecting suitable candidates and "suggest the time frame for implementation of the revised pattern of examination".

The committee headed by former HRD Secretary and retired IAS officer B S Baswan will

examine the time frame in which the examination is conducted and suggest suitable changes to reduce the time taken for selection of candidates by utilising information and communication technologies, as per its Terms of Reference (ToR).

The expert committee will submit its report within six months of its constitution, in February next year, it said.

It will evaluate the effectiveness of the existing scheme of the civil services examination in selecting suitable candidates keeping in view factors such as the need for inclusiveness in the selection process, fair mix of candidates from different disciplines, the skill-sets required for a modern, effective and efficient civil service and trainability of selected candidates, after reviewing the recommendations of previous expert committees in this regard.

The civil service examination is conducted by Union Public Service Commission annually in three stages - preliminary, main and interview - to select officers for Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

The panel will also examine the plan of examination, number of papers, their structure and duration, marking scheme, weightage of marks and system of evaluation "so as to arrive at an examination pattern that is holistic and does not exhibit any bias for or against candidates from any particular stream, subject area, language or region", according to the ToR.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 8, 2015
Verify employees' service annually: Centre tells all departments

"The exercise of annual verification be monitored by every ministry, department or cadre controlling authority on a quarterly basis," it said.

NEW DELHI: All central government departments have been asked to verify employees' service record annually and inform them of any deficiencies thereof in order to check delay in processing their pension.

With the objective of eliminating delays in processing of cases of retiring government servants, the Personnel Ministry has asked the departments to immediately undertake an exercise to ensure completion of the entries of service verification and conclude within a defined time-frame.

"Any gap in the verification of service may be intimated to the employee concerned, and simultaneously appropriate action for ensuring verification of missing spells may be taken by the Head of Office," it said in a directive to all ministries.

The government servant concerned may also be informed of deficiencies and gaps as

regards missing entries relating to verification of service and the period thereof, the order said.

In order to preclude and cut down on delays in payment of retiral benefits to government servants retiring of superannuation, the ministries may consider annual service verification and intimation to every officer regarding service verification status so that any lapse is timely ascertained and corrective action taken.

"The exercise of annual verification be monitored by every ministry, department or cadre controlling authority on a quarterly basis," it said.

There are about 50 lakh central government employees.

All ministries are requested to issue suitable instructions to all Heads of Offices, and Pay and Accounts Offices for strict compliance of the instructions so as to preclude any delays in disbursement of retiral benefits of government servants, the directive said.

DEFENCE, NATIONAL

TELEGRAPH, OCT 8, 2015
Matter of honour: Orop is a pointer to a crisis in India's civil-military relations
Brijesh D. Jayal

It is rarely that the ministry of defence in South Block hosts a press briefing by the defence minister. So when one such briefing was announced, one anticipated that the mandarins were all set to put their best foot forward and close one deeply unfortunate chapter in a frayed civil-military relationship. A chapter that opened in 1973, when the armed forces' pay and pensions were lowered and those of their civil counterparts increased, thus setting the trend for a progressive decline in their relative status. The origins of this chapter go back to the early years of independence itself, when the prime minister even wondered whether the armed forces would be needed.

The present low in the history of civil-military relations has its origins in the unfulfilled promises made by successive administrations to deliver on the principle of 'one rank one pension'. Why patience snapped this time is difficult to say, but the unfortunate outcome was that a significant section of veterans decided to follow the example of unions and activists and set up camp at Jantar Mantar, Delhi. It goes without saying that this decision was driven by an uncaring political executive that had for four decades systematically downgraded the armed forces both in pay and status and then ignored more recent signals of appeal and the returning of medals to the president. When successive supreme commanders chose not to meet veterans' delegations surrendering medals, the die was truly cast.

The entire world now watches the spectacle of veteran soldiers of the largest democracy on the streets. Just when one thought that civil-military relations had hit rock bottom, we beheld the unholy sight of the police attempting to forcibly evict veterans. To a society used to taking its armed forces for granted, to a Parliament that takes little interest and to a polity that has outsourced the task of handling the armed forces to the bureaucracy, this minor episode may be just an irritant. But to those for whom *izzat* or honour is more precious than life, this one image has left a deep scar.

During the nearly three months that this unholy spectacle has been allowed to fester, the veteran leadership has begun to appear louder, shriller and, regrettably, more inflexible. Viewers have been told that it is not about money but *izzat*, about wars fought and sacrifices made. To see distinguished veterans pleading to be treated with honour is deeply saddening, since honour is in our hearts and not displayed on the sleeves and, more importantly, can never be asked for. The reality is that not many people really care and by sounding like budding netas, the veteran leadership is hurting its own cause and, by extension, of the armymen still serving. They need to pause and reflect.

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With this backdrop, it is not surprising that the entire nation looked forward to the defence minister's press meet. The likely outcome of what the minister would have to say had already been dissected threadbare in television studios the previous day. With the leaders of veterans who had met the minister in an upbeat mood, one had hoped that curtains would be drawn on the most unfortunate period of civil-military relations in independent India's history. When the minister, accompanied by the three service chiefs, the minister of state for defence and the defence secretary entered the room, there were huge expectations. Lakhs of concerned veterans and widows were no doubt glued to their television screens. It was understandable that the defence minister chose to read from a prepared text and not field questions as the subject is complex and can lead to unnecessary misinterpretations.

Personally, this writer wishes that the defence minister had avoided mention of the previous government as this would have kept politics out of a subject that is of vital significance not just to the civil-military relationship but also to the security of the nation. Politics would have then been kept away from the hallowed precincts of South Block. But that was not to be. His statement that personnel who voluntarily retire will not be covered under the Orop scheme came as a bolt from the blue. It sent shock waves through a large community of pensioners who stand to lose much. In fairness, it has to be noted that the defence minister did mention that the injured and the disabled would be exempt and the details of the arrangement will follow. But this was no consolation to the veterans and widows adversely affected. One was taken aback at the cavalier manner in which this vital issue was touched upon, leading to the impression that either the MoD was being too clever by half or simply did not care.

Within minutes of this statement, this writer received calls from two widows who expressed their deep anxiety. Not surprisingly, the same disapproval echoed from the Jantar Mantar. By evening, representatives of the veterans had met the defence minister. They were assured that the voluntary retirement scheme was indeed not applicable to the defence personnel and it was left to the prime minister to issue a clarification at a rally in Faridabad the next day to calm the frayed nerves at Jantar Mantar. One unguarded and casual moment had robbed the occasion from being a historic gesture to the veterans, leading one to wonder if the nation's survival in a nuclear neighbourhood was in safe hands.

That politics took over was evident when the principal Opposition party lost no time in responding with a press conference led by none other than a former defence minister, whose long tenure will be remembered for indecisiveness. There was another erstwhile minister, famous for his "zero loss" claim in the Spectrum scam. This merely shows that even issues affecting national security and the morale of the armed forces are fair game in political one-upmanship.

If there is one silver lining in the entire Orop saga, it is that for the first time there is greater awareness about the armed forces in civil society and many want to learn more. In a study on suicides in the army of the United States of America (a phenomenon seriously plaguing our own), the authors George Mastroianni and Wilbur Scott make the point that

civilian control over the military means that each member of society is ultimately responsible for what happens to its military members. They conclude that not asking questions that may yield uncomfortable answers would amount to breaking faith with those who have sacrificed immeasurably more in our name. So today if many Indian citizens are asking questions and seeking answers, this is a welcome change and we owe it to them to provide some uncomfortable answers. A historical background is hence in order to put the present context within the larger perspective of civil-military relations in the country.

It was the towering personality of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, that set the stage for civil-military relations in India as they have evolved. Srinath Raghavan in a paper titled,"Soldiers, Statesmen and Strategy", states that this relationship was shaped by Nehru's understanding of the pernicious effects of militarism in Europe and Japan. The humiliation that the Indian armed forces suffered in the 1962 conflict with China was the result of political interference in military matters, the high-handedness of the bureaucracy with no domain knowledge and the co-opting of ambitious senior commanders into a political game plan. Yet we learn from Neville Maxwell's book, *India's China War* that after this, Nehru, in his letter to Bertrand Russell, still refers to "the danger of the military mentality spreading in India and the power of the Army increasing." Even a national military humiliation did not move a statesman of Nehru's stature enough to appreciate the damage being caused to national security by the trust deficit in civil-military relations that was being promoted by a political executive fearful of an imaginary overbearing military. This speaks of the deep-rooted schism that we see in civil-military relations today.

In the weeks preceding these unfortunate happenings, nations inimical to our security were not just watching, but also drawing their own conclusions. China celebrated the 70th anniversary of its victory over Japan by holding an unprecedented military parade where their latest and most sophisticated weapons systems and arsenal of nuclear ballistic missile capability were on display. This was aimed to convey a message to neighbours, the US and other world powers.

Pakistan's defence minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, perhaps enjoying the spectacle playing out at Jantar Mantar, could not resist the temptation of warning that the option of using nuclear weapons was always open to Pakistan and then following this some weeks later by saying that Pakistan was ready for a short or long conflict and will inflict heavy losses on India. The Pakistan army chief followed this up by stating that Kashmir was Pakistan's unfinished agenda.

What we see today is the pent-up frustration of the armed forces that has built up over the decades. What could pass unnoticed in the past is no longer possible in today's information age, and the warts are beginning to show. The above-mentioned instances also show that India's adversaries are drawing their own conclusions. So where do we go from here?

Rajeev Chandrasekhar, member of the Rajya Sabha, through his sustained work over nine years in Parliament and with different governments, has majorly contributed to the historic success that the veterans have today achieved. His suggestion that the veteran leadership now choose a path of discussion, and not confrontation, needs to be heard with great respect. But the civil society and the government of India have to question why a vibrant democracy with a thoroughly professional and apolitical military has ended up with a completely shattered civil-military relationship. To them, one can only repeat an appeal that has been made many a time in these columns - that of setting up a blue ribbon commission to look at the entire spectrum of this challenging subject so that the largest democracy can set an example for others to follow.

The author is a retired air marshal of the Indian Air Force

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 14, 2015
NITI Aaayog cuts number of divisions to 15
By Yogima Sharma

NITI Aayog has halved the number of divisions in the organisation to 15, a move aimed at rationalisation that comes after the premier think tank reduced its staff by 60%.

NEW DELHI: NITI Aayog has halved the number of divisions in the organisation to 15, a move aimed at rationalisation that comes after the premier think tank reduced its staff by 60%.

An official notification dated October 6 shows that the Aayog will have only 15 verticals created by merging some of the less important divisions, doing away with those where there was little work and renaming others to reflect the focus areas of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government.

The Aayog had last month done away with a large number of employees of its predecessor, the decades old Planning Commission, to bring down the overall strength of the institution to less than 500.

Most of the officials that ET spoke to said on the condition of anonymity that the institution is only doing the assignments given to it from time to time mostly by the Prime Minister's Office.

Since there is no day-today work assigned to the Aayog, there is no need of dedicated divisions for all sectors, they said.

"The work area of the Aayog is vast but there is no concrete routine work that we are required to perform.

So far we have been only assisting the subgroups and the task forces on some subjects and once that gets over there will not be much work," said a senior government official at the Aayog, requesting not to be identified.

As per the notification, a dedicated division of poverty estimation and data analysis has been set up while skill development has been added to education and labour, which have been merged into one division.

Likewise, infrastructure division, which was the most popular division during the previous government's tenure, has been merged with transport and tourism while land resources has been added to agriculture division.

Citing the example of the three sub-groups set up under the governing council of the Aayog, another official said that since work has been completed on all of them the officials concerned are waiting to get some fresh assignment to be delivered in a timebound manner.

A third official of the Aayog said that despite the focus on cooperative federalism most of the states and almost all central ministries are not heeding the advice of the Aayog, making it difficult for the institution to deliver on time.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, OCT 8, 2015
NITI Aayog seeks law to regulate the regulators
Chetan Chauhan

A new draft law recommends segregation of non-judicial and judicial work of regulators and stipulates criteria for selection of chairperson and members of regulatory bodies in the country.

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has submitted a draft of a law to regulate the regulators to the finance ministry that aims to create a uniform national framework for orderly development of infrastructure and protection of consumer interests.

"We have held consultations with representatives of 30 stakeholder bodies and have recommended a draft that would change basic functioning of some of the regulatory bodies. It will lead to uniform regulatory system in the country," a NITI Aayog functionary told HT.

As of now, the port regulator is mandated to set tariffs only whereas the electricity sector regulators have much wider powers of rule-making, licensing, power market development and imposing of penalties. The telecom regulator's job is also to promote competition, which is not assigned to port or electricity regulators. Only some sectors like electricity and telecom have appellate tribunals whereas others like ports do not have such tribunals and perform both the functions.

A big change the panel had recommended is that the function of rule-making and administration of rules should be separated from judicial function. This would mean that the regulator will frame rules and ensure their implementation whereas the appeals against the orders passed by the regulators would be heard by Appellate Tribunals.

Sources said the proposed law would result in creation of regulators and appellate bodies for infrastructure sectors such as road and civil aviation. It will lead to curbing of over-arching powers of some of regulators. "The decision on this will have to be taken by the finance ministry," the NITI Aayog official said.

He said the draft law prescribes elaborate procedure for appointment and removal of chairpersons and members of the regulating bodies and the tribunals. This is to reduce government intervention and to ensure transparency in functioning of the regulatory bodies, the official said.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley in his budget speech 2015-16 had announced introduction of regulatory reforms law across various sectors of infrastructure. The UPA government in 2013 had drafted the regulatory reforms bill but it could not be taken up by the cabinet due to differences.

The NDA government is expected to take a decision on the new regulatory framework that it believes would infuse more investment into the infrastructure sector and will result in ease of doing business. Officials expect the bill to be introduced in winter session of Parliament.

EDUCATION

Setting standards for schools

M. SHUHEB KHAN

Two recent judgments of the Allahabad High Court have created chaos in the Uttar Pradesh (UP) educational system. In the first, Justice Sudhir Agarwal's order on Aug. 20 asked the State government to create a framework to ensure that children of government employees are enrolled only in government-run primary schools. Then, on September 12, a three-judge full bench, headed by the Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, cancelled the appointments of 1.32 lakh Shiksha Mitras (Para Teachers) on the grounds that they had not cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), prescribed by the Right to Education Act 2010. the judgment also halted the assimilation of the remaining 40,000 Siksha Mitras.

Both the judgments show the annoyance of the judiciary over mismanagement of government schools by the State government. The first decision was welcomed in several quarters, as a measure to increase accountability that would lead to improved teaching standards. However, even if the government shows the political will to frame effective guidelines, the decision will be challenged in the Supreme Court and is unlikely to pass scrutiny for two reasons. First, for a government employee, sending his/her child to a government school is never part of the terms of employment at the time of the induction. Second, even if it is made part of the service contracts in future recruitments, it will infringe upon the rights of the child to have a free choice.

The second judgment on the cancellation of appointments of Shiksha Mitras has put the life of 1.72 lakh families in disarray with reports coming in of teachers committing suicide. These para teachers have been teaching in government schools since 2000 at meagre salary of Rs. 3500 per month and many of the schools are dependent on them. Considering their 15 years of teaching experience, the government needs to come out with an appropriate solution.

Steady decline

Beyond the immediate impact, the judgments have forced attention on the appalling condition of government schools in UP. As these schools have declined, specially in the rural areas, private schools have mushroomed, given the lax regulatory and administrative environment. The lure of private schools in rural areas started with the aspiration to learn English in the late 1990s when government schools did not teach the language at the primary level. In the first phase, children from the educated/affluent

classes migrated to private schools. This class used to hold teachers/officials accountable for standards in government schools. With their departure, the quality of education started declining; soon the middle class followed suit in favour of private schools. As a result, the social profile of students in government schools has undergone a significant change with most of these schools now catering only to students from socially and economically marginalised sections.

Lack of access to government schools also led to an increase in the number of private schools. Despite a substantial increase in population, the number of government schools in rural areas has not increased in the last two decades. Private schools have filled the void. The situation was aggravated by the apathy of government teachers and the administration. The bandwagon effect has been so strong that the parents who send their children to a government school now carry a sense of guilt.

However, there have been questions over the quality of education in the burgeoning private schools. A majority of these schools in rural and semi-urban areas charge around just Rs. 100 per month as fees. Even at that level, 15 to 20 per cent of the students default annually. As a result, these schools do not generate enough revenue to pay decent salaries, with a majority of the teachers earning less than Rs. 3,000 a month. Low salaries deter the hiring and retention of qualified teachers, which then translates into poor quality of education. While some parents are genuinely unable to afford higher fees, even those with higher incomes are unwilling to pay more. The key reason this is lack of information about the quality of education in the school. As a result, a dedicated person running a school is treated on par with a fly-by-night operator.

Losing the best

The depressing and counterintuitive aspect of this whole situation is that large-scale government hiring such as the ongoing recruitments of qualified teachers, while necessary, is not contributing to enhanced quality. The best teachers escape the exploitative conditions of private schools and become part of a dysfunctional government school system where the accountability is very low.

For the last two years, Buniyaad, an NGO, has been evaluating the performance of schools based on a test in the rural areas of Sant Kabir Nagar (UP). Around 40 schools, both private and government, have participated in the test. The tests have revealed the following four important points: While the performance of private schools was relatively better than that of government schools, in absolute terms, the performance of a majority of private schools was poor; parents' willingness to pay for better performing schools increased significantly depending on performance; with increased resources, schools were able to hire/retain better quality teachers; the incentive for performing well has created competition among schools resulting in significant improvement in the quality of education.

Systemic overhaul

Even if the UP government resolves the legal tangle, the possibility of improvement in education in government-run schools in the near future is bleak. A major systemic overhaul is required to improve standards. A voucher system could be introduced wherein every child is given a voucher/coupon of say Rs. 300 a month for the monthly fee, which can be redeemed for cash by the school. However, lack of information about the education quality in schools will continue to persist.

To overcome this challenge, the government should establish five or six affordable residential schools in each district, modelled on the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, with an intake of around 2000 to 3000 students at various levels through an entrance test. This will not only motivate students but also act as a mechanism to assess the quality of other private and government schools in the district. Schools with better results in the admission test will potentially attract more students with vouchers, which will augment their financial resources. The competition will incentivise private schools to provide quality education through better trained and dedicated teachers.

Voucher system can also be leveraged to improve accountability in government schools. The salary of government teaches should have two components; fixed and variable. Let the government schools compete with private schools for students with vouchers. A system can be created to distribute the resources generated in a government school from vouchers among the teachers.

(M. Shuheb Khan is a researcher at ICRIER. The views are personal.shuhebkhan01@gmail.com)

Government hiring is not contributing to better quality as teachers in private schools have become part of dysfunctional state school system

EMINENT PERSONALITIES

STATESMAN, OCT 8, 2015
Bose unnecessarily maligned
Kuldip Nayar

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has done well to declassify the files on Subhas Chandra Bose. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should have followed suit and made available to the public the documents and papers which the Centre possesses on Bose.

While declassifying 64 files comprising 12,744 pages, the chief minister informed the media that documents proved the Bose family was spied upon. "It's proven…I will only say it is unfortunate," Banerjee said. The first disclosures in April by a media house revealed 20-year-long surveillance on the Bose family, between 1948 and 1968. These were accessed from only two declassified Special Branch files of around 50 pages. The papers reveal how dozens of spies of the Intelligence Branch, as the state IB was then called, mounted surveillance on Netaji's older brother Sarat Chandra and his sons Amiya Nath Bose and Sisir Kumar Bose.

The IB sleuths intercepted letters at a post office near their residences and tailed the family members around the country, drafting secret reports that were sent to IB headquarters in New Delhi. These early revelations from the huge mass of documents have rightly incensed the Bose family.

"This kind of surveillance is usually done on anti-national elements and not freedom fighters like Sarat Bose," Netaji's grand-nephew Chandra Kumar Bose said. The Bose family has reiterated its demand for a probe by the Centre into the snooping.

A Special Branch letter from the trove of documents declassified recently reveals the government order which first authorised interception of the Bose family letters from their residences on 38/2 Elgin Road and 1 Woodburn Park, Calcutta: Government Order No. 1735 dated 20/9/48. The Special Branch cites this letter to ask its headquarters for a one-year extension in the interception period because it had been carried on 'with good results'.

This is a sad reflection on Jawaharlal Nehru. Understandably, the Congress party is quiet. Yet, the party should have privately assured the Bose family that it would have no objection if there were an inquiry to apportion responsibility.

Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were the two leading lights of national struggle against the British rulers. Both were close lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi, who was guiding the movement. The difference between the two was that Nehru, distinctly against weapons, had come to have full faith in non-violence as the method against the mighty British masters to win freedom.

Even when he differed with Gandhiji, who found no difference between Germany's Hitler and Great Britain's Winston Churchill, Nehru's sympathy lay with the Allies fighting against the Axis powers to protect and preserve democracy. For some reasons, Gandhiji had come to believe that Germany would win the war. He took many years to change his viewpoint. But this did affect the thinking of the Congress party leading the national movement.

Nehru often expressed his sympathy with the Allies in the sittings of the Congress Working Committee, the party's apex body. However, he followed Gandhiji who, Nehru believed, would release the country from British bondage. Bose was clear in his view that violence should be used if necessary. When he escaped from jail at Kolkata and travelled all the way to Germany through Afghanistan, he thought that there was no harm in getting assistance from a dictator to liberate India. (I have visited the two-storey house where Bose spent the night.)

With the disclosures of files at Kolkata, a forgotten chapter of India's freedom movement has been restored. Bose, who constructed Indian National Army (INA), with the support of Indians living in South East Asia, has got the spotlight.

There is no doubt that he guided the Indians living in South East Asia to establish the INA. Whether the Japanese would have allowed India to live as an independent nation after liberation is difficult to imagine. The fascists had their own agenda and had no place for democratic thinking. But there is no doubting Bose's determination. He would have fought against the Japanese if they had tried to make India their colony.

New Delhi, the centre of British rule, has the key files. I doubt that even if they are made public, the question would still nag the nation whether all had been disclosed and whether some files that showed Nehru in a bad light had been destroyed. One thing which has

been proved without any doubt is that the Nehru government was keeping surveillance on the Bose family even after his reported death in an air crash in 1945.

In fact, the air crash story and 1945 as the date have come to be doubted after the files have been made public. It has become all the more necessary for the Central government to throw open all the files and papers relating to Bose. The Narendra Modi government should have no compunction in doing so whatever the fallout.One argument advanced for keeping the files secret is that the disclosures may have an adverse effect on relations with foreign countries. How it would be so is not yet explained. The Soviet Union where Bose took shelter has disintegrated. Moscow is now a far more liberal place than it was then. The archives should have some papers to throw light on that period as well.

For some reasons, the Modi government is reluctant to let the nation know the entire story. Whatever his compulsions, he would ill-serve democratic norms which demand that the people have the right to know. Surely, he doesn't want to be considered a person who acted as a censor and kept back from the people what they had the right to know.

Mamata's remark that what Nehru did was unfortunate would be echoed and may damage his image. But what he did was so un-Nehru like that he deserves to be criticized. Nehru's name is associated with free information which is essential for a free response in a democratic setup. In view of the disclosures, posterity is going to pass on a harsh judgment against India's icon and first Prime Minister.

The writer is a noted journalist, columnist and commentator.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate change the historical responsibility of the developed world: India

Environment minister says billions of people suffering from climate change cannot be ignored, even if the rich, developed countries tried to evade responsibility

Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Wednesday, the present climate change is the historical responsibility of the developed world. He said that the billions of people suffering from climate change cannot be ignored, even if the rich, developed countries tried to evade responsibility, he told reporters after reviewing India's preparedness before the summit. The upcoming Conference of Parties (COP21) conference in Paris this December,would aim to achieve a legally-binding and universal agreement on climate, aiming to keep global warming below 2°C.

The minister added that India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions are ambitious and have been welcomed by the entire world. He also underscored India's commitment to pursue the issues of climate justice, lifestyles and sustainable practices, addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his recent trip to the US.

Javadekar said, the agreement should be 'progressive and pragmatic' and the accord should deliver 'climate justice' to poorer sections and developing nations. India will also bring up the issue of providing carbon space to developing nations, he added.

Referring to the Earth Overshoot report, Javadekar said that it has already pointed out "that if we continue with the extravagant consumption, we will require five planets and India already values sustainable consumption practice."

India recently announced a "comprehensive and ambitious" pledge to reduce its greenhouse emission intensity by upto 35 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels, a 75 per cent jump over its present voluntary commitment.

HEALTH SERVICES

ASIAN AGE, OCT 12, 2015
New health policy: Private sector role set to grow?

Suggesting significant changes in the Centre's draft National Health Policy 2015 (NHP-2015), the Niti Aayog has suggested more engagement with the private sector in healthcare and setting up of a sickness fund, where people can contribute to avail of services from both private and public providers. It also advocated against offering a "chimera" of free drugs and healthcare to people.

These strong recommendations could delay the unveiling of the policy as the government must take into account these suggestions bef-ore finalising it, sources said. The sickness fund could be on the lines of the government's recen-tly-launched social security schemes like Atal Pension Yojana, Pradh-an Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, contributory in nature, Niti Aayog suggested to the government.

In a note on its views on the NHP-2015 draft, a copy of which is with this newspaper, the government's think tank strongly opposed its vision of providing "free care and drugs". It noted that the government struggled to provide even one per cent of GDP for healthcare.

HOUSING

DDA to auction small land pockets in dense areas
Risha Chitlangia

New Delhi: Struggling to protect its vacant land parcels from encroachment, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has decided to auction small land parcels in densely-populated areas. Officials said data will be put online for public scrutiny by the year-end.

At present, the land-owning agency is compiling data of all the vacant plots under its jurisdiction. "Vacant land near residential areas will be put up for auction for development purpose depending on the land use. This will help in optimal utilization of land and generate revenue," said a senior DDA official.

"For every land parcel, officials will have to take nine photographs of the plot from all directions and of the official who is in charge of the land. The database will also have details like size of the land, extent of encroachment and the legal status," said a DDA official.

To protect its land from encroachment, DDA is planning to use Delhi government's Geographic Information System (GIS) data. "Encroachment has been a pressing concern for long. We are now going to work in coordination with the government's revenue department to use their facility of GIS mapping to check encroachment on our vacant lands," said a senior official.

But before using the GIS facility for accurately marking land coordinates and identifying the extent of encroachment, officials said there is a need to identify vacant plots. The final database will be updated every three months. "This will help us know the exact status of the land. Our aim is to identify large chunks of plots. Through GIS mapping we can monitor the plots," the official said.

At present, the authority has 77,083 acres of land under it, of which close to 13,000 is either encroached or under litigation. Officials admitted that reclaiming its own land has become a herculean task for the authority due to stiff opposition from locals. "There are

various types of encroachments by religious bodies, slums dwellers, etc. We can't adopt a common strategy in all the cases," said an official.

The new initiative will help DDA minimise the scale of the problem.

LIBRARIES

HINDU, OCT 8, 2015
National War Memorial to come up near India Gate

JOSY JOSEPH

Over six decades after consultation was first initiated for a national memorial for military martyrs of independent India, the Central government on Wednesday gave the final approval for a National War Memorial and a National War Museum.

The proposal has been pending since the 1960s.

"The Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi today approved the construction of a National War Memorial and a National War Museum at Princess Park, near India Gate, New Delhi, in memory of all Indian soldiers who have made the supreme sacrifice for the country post-Independence," an official statement said.

The project, estimated to cost Rs. 500 crore, will be completed in five years. It will come up near India Gate, which was built by the British as the All India War Memorial to commemorate the sacrifices of 13,300 soldiers who died in World War I and the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Official sources said the government may go in for a fresh global design for the war memorial.

As the proposal picked pace a few years ago during the UPA regime, Charles Correa, the renowned architect who passed away on June 16 this year, designed the memorial around India Gate. A senior Defence Ministry official said that during a presentation to the Prime Minister by the three Services, Mr. Modi had suggested it should be among the best in the world. The Correa design was not final, the official added.

"We will have a global approach," the official said about the design.

PARAMILITARY FORCES

Government against 'organized' status for paramilitary
Abhinav Garg & Neeraj Chauhan,TNN

NEW DELHI: The government is planning to approach the Supreme Court against a high court directive to grant organized services' status to all paramilitary forces, as it feels that this would lead to indiscipline in the forces.

In a recent judgment, the Delhi HC had ordered the Centre to undertake "non - functional financial upgradation" of these forces. If implemented, the directions would have resulted in improved pay grades and career prospects of officers from Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force and Indo-Tibetan Border Police, by treating them as an organized cadre.

However, sources say that the home ministry is against the move and wants to test the court order's legal validity before the apex court where an SLP (special leave petition) is likely to be filed soon.

"There are command and control issues that have not been given enough attention in the Delhi HC verdict. As disciplined forces the paramilitary cannot tolerate indiscipline and some of the directions, if implemented, may encourage this tendency. The MHA has already indicated its stand in the Lok Sabha reply of the home minister. We plan to go to SC," a source in the ministry said.

The government has decided to go on appeal despite some senior officials being in favour of the Delhi HC order.

Sources say that the director general of one of the paramilitary forces has, in fact, recently told the MHA that "the order should be implemented soon or else it will be contempt of court".

A division bench of Justice Kailash Gambhir and Justice Najmi Waziri had directed that group 'A' officers of paramilitary forces should be treated as "organised services" and

given all benefits including NFU from 2006. HC had allowed the petitions filed by more than 200 serving and retired officers of the paramilitary forces seeking the court's direction for grant of NFU to them alleging the deprivation of the financial benefit is "affecting the morale and efficiency of the officers".

They had sought direction for the central government to treat them as "organised cadre" and grant them the NFU benefits.

NFU is a concept introduced in the pay commission and was granted to what the government termed as 'Group A organised services'. Under NFU, if even one officer from a particular batch moves up the force hierarchy leaving others below, the lack of vacancies won't come in the way of others also getting automatic financial upgradation to similar pay.

HC's order had triggered a round of celebration among the 10,000-strong officers spread across the various paramilitary forces who stood to benefit from it, since the ruling is expected to remove stagnation and ensure promotion and other service-related benefits to their officers.

PARLIAMENT

Not the right time for a pay hike for Delhi MLAs

An independent committee of experts that was looking into the revision of pay and allowances for Delhi MLAs has proposed a significant increase from Rs 88,000 to Rs 2.10 lakh per month. This will provoke criticisms that the government of the Aam Aadmi Party, which set out as a voluntarist movement, morphed into a political party, secured power and once sacrificed it on grounds of principle, is now rewarding its functionaries with increased pay. Some have pointed to the irony by dredging up chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's tweet in 2012 that mocked political parties for being willing to secure a consensus on increased salaries "in five minutes" as opposed to their dithering on the Lokpal for 44 years.

There is, however, a serious issue of principle involved — one which politicians struggle to get right as it involves perceptions of rewarding themselves as professionals. The assumption the world over concerning political leaders and public officials is to accord them a decent pay so they eschew rent-seeking temptations when in office. The idea is that if politicians and officials are well paid, and if their accession to office has been above board in the first place, their service will likely be untainted by graft. To that end, the experts committee has a point. If citizens want capable figures to take to public life, then the salaries for elected representatives should be comparable to professional peers. And some of the allowances that are factored into the proposed hike are MLAs' legitimate expenses, which are by no means cheap. These include office rent, transport, communication — and secretarial and research support, which are critical to better acquaint politicians with legislative processes and meet with the daily demands of constituents. Everyone will concede that a salary component of Rs 12,000 is hardly enough for a middle class family to make its ends meet in the Capital.

That said, Mr Kejriwal would be advised to handle this recommendation carefully, given the flak his government is facing, particularly about its handling of the dengue epidemic, which is spreading in the Capital and has brought into focus the poor state of sanitation

and the availability of healthcare. There is a sense in Delhi that his government has expended too much effort on the turf war with lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung, rather than get down to the business of governance. Delhi's citizens are disaffected by the state of the city's infrastructure and Mr Kejriwal's constituents like auto and taxi drivers too are unhappy with his failure to change the regulatory environment in their favour. His MLAs may have to wait for their terms to improve — as the city they govern is.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 8, 2015
Delhi MLA's pay hike: Panel rejects 'misplaced reports'

The three-member committee of experts, which has recommended a substantial hike in the salary and allowances of Delhi MLAs, today justified their proposal saying it was a product of "careful and thorough" examination and will not make city legislators the highest paid in the country

NEW DELHI: The three-member committee of experts, which has recommended a substantial hike in the salary and allowances of Delhi MLAs, today justified their proposal saying it was a product of "careful and thorough" examination and will not make city legislators the highest paid in the country.

Member-Secretary of the Committee of Experts and Secretary, Prasanna Kumar Suryadevara, said the panel desisted from making any comparisons either with the Parliament or any of the state legislatures while making its recommendations.

"The committee intends to elaborate on this since this widely publicised perception is misleading and misplaced," Suryadevara said on the recommendations of salary hike and the subsequent uproar over it.

He welcomed the debate over the issue terming it as a positive step and a "healthy sign" for the country's democracy.

"After a careful and thorough examination of all aspects, the committee completed its job in a professional manner and to the best of the ability of its members.

"Since 2014, the basic salary of MLAs in Assam is Rs 60,000 per month. Therefore, we were a bit surprised to see reports about 'highest salary', since our recommendation is to raise the salary of Delhi MLAs to only Rs 50,000 per month," his statement said.

It said as opposed to Goa, where constituency allowance is already Rs 90,000, the panel has suggested Rs 50,000 for Delhi's lawmakers.

The panel has recommended doing away with the current practice of reimbursing domestic electricity and water bills while insisting that MLAs produce receipt to get their office assistance fees of Rs 70,000 reimbursed.

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"In today's reports, it is being projected that this amount also goes to the pocket of MLA. Minus this, the total amount that we recommended on account of salary, constituency allowance, transport allowance and communication allowance comes to Rs 1,40,000 only," it said.

ECONOMIC TIMES, OCT 9, 2015
MPs want say in deciding their salary and allowances

MPs from most parties today insisted that they should have the final say in determining their salaries and emoluments through a Parliamentary Committee even as Government sets up an independent mechanism to make recommendations on it

NEW DELHI: MPs from most parties today insisted that they should have the final say in determining their salaries and emoluments through a Parliamentary Committee even as Government sets up an independent mechanism to make recommendations on it.

They expressed the views at a meeting of the Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members of Parliament headed by BJP MP Yogi Adityanath, who was re-elected Chairman of the panel for one more year.

The government had in the last week of September proposed to constitute a 3-member Emoluments Commission to determine the salary and allowances of MPs, which was endorsed at the two-day All India Whips Conference on September 29 and 30.

The proposal had come in the backdrop of a controversy over a parliamentary panel's recommendations in June to double the pay and perks of lawmakers.

Today was the the first meeting of the reconstituted Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of MPs, where the issue of setting up an independent mechanism to decide the salary and perks of MPs came up for discussion.

"We have no objection to the government setting up any independent mechanism but that should not dilute the mandate of the Parliamentary committee constituted for the purpose. Any expert group can make its recommendations but it should go to the government only through the panel of MPs.

"Any expert group's recommendations cannot be superimposed on the panel of MPs," a member of the Committee told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

Sources said MPs from most parties, who attended the meeting today, made it clear that the mandate of the Parliamentary panel should "not be diluted".

"Our argument is that even if a three-member commission is set up, it should function under the Parliamentary panel which should have the powers to review its

recommendations. Otherwise what is the point in continuing with this Parliamentary panel," the member said.

With the members not willing to allow any independent mechanism to have its sole say in determining their salary and allowances, the issue is back to square one.

Proposing the Emoluments Commission to determine salary and allowances of MPs, Government had said that was being done to decide this in a fair, transparent and equitable manner.

"The setting up of an independent Emoluments Commission for recommending the salaries and allowances of MPs will not only put to rest the public outcry and media criticism over MPs themselves deciding their salaries, it will also provide an appropriate opportunity to take into consideration the huge responsibilities and the important role they play in our representative democracy.

"It would ensure that recommendations on Parliamentary salary are reached in a fair, transparent and equitable way. Once there is consensus on setting up of the Commission, the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act,1954 will be suitably amended," it had said.

In June, the parliamentary panel headed by Adityanath had pitched for 100 percent hike in salary and daily allowances of MPs and 75 percent raise in pension of ex-MPs apart from facilities for their 'companions' in place of 'spouses'.

Amid the controversy over the panel's proposal for increasing salaries of MPs, former Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee had suggested that the the issue should be addressed by an independent pay commission exclusively meant for MPs.

Chatterjee had also claimed that as Speaker he had called a meeting of all parties on the issue and later sent a note to the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh regarding it. However, the UPA Cabinet did not favour the decision then.

Even when the salary issue was being discussed in the panel headed by Adityanath this year, CPI-M's K N Balagopal and JD-U's K C Tyagi favoured that the salary of MPs should be done by an independent body with MPs not playing any role into it.

The panel had also sought doubling of the existing Rs 50,000 salary of MPs and favoured increasing the pension of former parliamentarians from Rs 20,000 to Rs 35,000.

This had led to a controversy and the ministry rejected most of the panel's recommendations.

As per Article 106 of the Constitution, salaries of MPs are determined by the Act of 1954, amended from time to time. The last revision in their salary was made in 2010 under which MPs presently get a basic salary of Rs.50,000 per month. Salaries of

Members of State Legislatures are decided as per Article 195 of the Constitution.

As per a comparative analysis of Members of Parliament in 37 developing and developed countries, basic salary of MPs are in the range of a meagre Rs 7,952 in Tunisia to a high of Rs 6,16,675 per month in Israel. MPs of only in six countries -- Tunisia, Venezuela, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Haiti and Panama are drawing salaries less than that of Indian MPs.

According to a survey conducted by Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) of 138 chambers from 104 Parliaments, 69 chambers indicated that it is Parliament which determines the salaries of members. 31 of these stated that MPs' salaries are determined in reference to the Civil Service salary scale. In case of Bhutan, Namibia and the UK's House of Commons, salaries are determined by independent bodies.

An MP in India gets a salary of Rs 50,000 per month. In addition, Rs 2,000 per day is paid as daily allowance when the MP signs the register while attending Parliament sessions or House committee meetings. The MP is entitled to Rs 45,000 constituency allowance every month -- Rs 15,000 for stationery and Rs 30,000 to employ secretarial assistance staff.

MPs are also entitled for a government accommodation, air travel and train travel facilities, besides three landline and two mobile phones. They also get a loan of Rs 4 lakh to buy a vehicle.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

STATESMAN, OCT 12, 2015
Time for a change in political culture
Bibekananda Ray

Common people in India have a dim view of politics and politicians. They cynically think politicians in power or out of it are wicked and self-serving. This mass perception may be exaggerated; there are, and have been, politicians who are exceptions. After all, it is because of politicians in power that some development is taking place and life for many is getting better.

Politics is as old as mankind; it emerged when man began to live together, away from forests and pastures where they lived by hunting, or grazing cattle. The word comes from Greek, politikos, meaning 'of, for, or relating to citizens', the practice and theory of influencing people; it is achieving and exercising positions of governance, organized control over a community, or a state.

In an extended sense, it is the study or practice of the distribution of power and resources within a given community. Although kings ruled, rudimentary non-monarchical governments did exist in Vedic India (1500–500 BC), run by elected 'aristocrats' but they were not as prosperous as the 16 Buddhist polities, called Maha Janapadas, founded and run by a tribe, Lichhabi in the Kathmandu valley between 400 and 750 AD.
The city of Vesali (now Vaishali in Bihar) had over 15,000 buildings, over 7,000 parks and lotus ponds and fabulous courtesans like Ambapali; two other such polities were Kapilavatthu and Kusavati.

Democracy began in ancient Greece too. In 507 B.C. in Athens King Cleisthenes introduced certain political reforms that he called demokratia, or 'rule by the people', resting on three institutions- the ekklesia, a sovereign governing body that wrote laws and dictated foreign policy; the boule, a council of representatives from the ten Athenian tribes and the dikasteria, the popular courts in which citizens argued cases before a randomly selected jury. It ran for only two hundred years but became a precedent in global democratic thinking.

As the Mughal era was coming to an end, parts of India were colonized by European powers from the early 17th century - the Dutch from 1605 to 1825, the Danes from 1620

to 1869, the French from 1769 to 1954, the Portuguese from 1505 to 1961 and the British from 1612 to 1947 - when they held sway over two-thirds of India including Burma; the remaining one-third comprised more than 500 so-called 'princely States'.

Limited franchise allowing participation in the government was first introduced by the British Raj under the Government of India Act 1935 but elected governments came into vogue from November 1950 when the present Constitution was proclaimed; thus Westminster-type democracy is only 65 years old in India.

Before India became independent, shedding two far-flung parts to form Pakistan on 14 August 1947, only six political parties were in existence - the Indian National Congress (1885), the Communist Party of India (1925), the All-India Forward Block (1939), Jammu & Kashmir National Conference (1932), Shiromani Akali Dal (1920) and All-India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (1927, active in Telengana region).

The Indian Union Muslim League was the first to be launched after Independence and the Partition, in 1948.

The All-India Muslim League was founded by the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference at Dhaka in the aftermath of the first partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon with the aim of securing the interests of Muslims in British India. It became the driving force behind the creation of Pakistan but when Muslim League passed the Pakistan resolution based on the 'Two-Nation' theory of Jinnah, progressive Muslim leaders like Maulana Azad and others opposed it. All-India Jamhur Muslim League was formed parallel to Muslim League with the Raja of Mahmoodabad (a close associate of Jinnah) as its president.

On 16 September 2014, the total number of parties registered with the Election Commission of India was 1761; of them six were 'national', 49 were 'state parties' and a whopping 1706 were unrecognised parties but only 464 of them, comprising 27.25 per cent, put up candidates in the Lok Sabha poll in 2014.

The Constitution is very liberal in respect of launching new parties. No wonder, the populace in India has been highly politicised. Nearly every aspect of daily life is controlled or influenced by politics. Parties intervene in admissions to schools, colleges and universities. Eligible applicants cannot get jobs until and unless they pay to local parties.

A relative of mine got a job offer in a Haldia company but could not join, because he refused to pay Rs 35,000 to the local CPI (M) satraps in 2009. The so-called 'syndicates', under cover of the ruling party, will not let a person build a house unless he buys materials from them. Come election, the party nominees go from door to door, begging votes but once elected, few visit the constituencies until the next poll and listen to, far less remove, people's grievances.

Common people have been so politicised that they do not believe one can get a job by just qualifying in tests and interviews. In fact, ordinary jobs are not available unless seekers figure among the recommended by the ruling party, often by hefty donations. Mamata Banerjee wrested power from formidable Left parties on promises of 'change' but in the last four years, she has redeemed few. The political culture that prevailed for 34 years of seven Left Front governments has not changed. TMCP cadres resort to violence in pre-poll and poll days, rig votes with the help of outsiders and terrorise genuine voters. Inter-party strife and skirmishes continue as in the Left regime. In polls for school, college and university students' unions, nominations by opposition parties are rendered difficult, if not impossible, by ruling party student leaders and hooligans. Heads of educational institutions are insulted, gheraoed in their offices, food and water denied, and assaulted on unreasonable demands and forced to quit.

West Bengal politics was not like this until 1967 when the first United Front seized power; the second UF (1969-70) accentuated it. The Congress monopoly in power since 1947 was dented with the rise of the subaltern and agrarian uprisings all over the State. On the plea of restoring justice, mayhem was committed by Marxists and Maoists. Politics was taken to the grassroots by the Left parties with the opening of rural party offices and hordes joining them as cadres and comrades. Rivalry and reprisal for perceived wrongs return with change of regimes.

Can it ever end and give common people some respite? West Bengal is indeed improving under the Mamata regime in many spheres but its politics and political culture give us a sense of deja vu. India as a whole is passing through an extraordinary transformation. In adopting new technologies, it is catching up with the West and Japan. It is time it ameliorates its political culture too.

Mass politicisation hides an unseemly craving for power and access to the exchequer for swindling. The media are full of financial scams involving politicians in and out of power. Ms. Banerjee's battle cry for change in 2011 should now extend to her political culture.

POVERTY

DECCAN HERALD, OCT 14, 2015
Global poverty dips but India stays poor

The World Bank's report on global poverty, which has just been released, has some good news. But it is not so good, though not entirely bad, for India, which has traditionally ranked among the world's poorest countries. The report has also stirred a debate about the methodology used to compute the poverty figures. This is not surprising because there never has been a poverty computation without contestation. The most important highlight of the report is that global poverty has steadily fallen over the past 25 years. The proportion of people living below the poverty line is set to decline from 12.6 per cent in 2012 to 9.6 per cent in 2015. This is important, because it is for the first time in history that the percentage is falling below 10. The decline is considered to be result of faster economic development all over the world since 1990. It has remained largely unaffected by the slowdown since 2008. But the major credit for the good figures would go China, which has lifted the largest number of people out of poverty in the shortest span of time in the recent past.

India may not have done too badly, with a sizeable reduction in the number people living in extreme poverty. But poverty is now concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Over one-third of the world's poor live in South Asia, and India has the largest number of them. Large variations among different regions and states continue, and inequalities have widened. Greater inequality means reduced participation by the poor in growth and a falling share of income growth. The situation is worse when poverty is measured not just in terms of income but other parameters like health and education. It is now accepted that poverty has to be measured by these factors too.

The World Bank has now revised its poverty line from $1.25 per day to $1.90 so that it reflects the present situation better. It is likely that the poverty level in India may be about 12.4 per cent by this standard, and the report says it might actually be lower. But the change in method-ology in measuring poverty, with a modification in the period of reference, is controversial. There is even a view that the figures of the fall in poverty, as suggested by the Bank, may not be completely real and actual, though there is some success in reducing absolute poverty. The message is that the challenge of poverty alleviation is as hard as it was in the past.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, OCT 12, 2015
Measuring poverty
Is it true that the number of poor people in the world has dipped to less than 1 billion?
By: Subhomoy Bhattacharjee

The World Bank and the world are pleasantly surprised by the extent of reported dip in the number of absolutely poor people globally. That surprise is, however, bankrolled by some fortuitous circumstances, including one from India. The number, for the first time,

has dipped to less than 1 billion. There are 700 million poor, according to the World Bank report Ending Extreme Poverty and Sharing Prosperity: Progress and Policies, released ahead of its annual meeting in Lima, Peru.

The key element about these numbers is they are just projections and not actual data points. So, the number of absolutely poor could be way off the mark. The Bank has estimated data points for poverty across 134 countries till 2011-12, and based on those data points the number of absolute poor stood at 1,011 million. The drop by 300 million from there is an expectation that is yet to be realised.

Over the past few decades—in fact, since 1979—the Bank has been attempting to accurately measure the extent of world population who are the poorest, all the while using a common scale to do so. In the process, it has developed a fabulous body of research. The exercise of trying to figure out the bare minimum it costs for a person to survive a day without becoming worse off the next day stems from this effort. When it was first framed, the colloquial estimate was a dollar (US) a day. It was set in 1991. By 2005, as prices increased globally, the number got upgraded to $1.25 by International Comparison Programme (ICP), an arm of the Bank that sets purchasing power parity (PPP) indices among countries. It is quite similar to the repeated estimates made in India to figure out the number of poor below the poverty line.

The logic is simple. To make comparisons work globally, the Bank converts this amount (say $1.25 a day) on the basis of the agreed PPP to figure out how much a poor would be able to buy in, say, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, India or Indonesia.

Since global prices had inflated from 2005 onwards, the ICP had advised the Bank to reset the basket of goods, which were available at $1.25, to a new number. This number has been set at $1.88; after rounding off, at $1.90.

The subsequent task is to use this number against the income and consumption data of each country, and then check how many people are above or below the line. In other words, how many Indians, for instance, earned above $1.25 a day as on 2005, or $1.90 per day as on 2011, or have remained below it.

This exercise threw up an interesting dataset. The set showed that, at 2005 prices, there were 1,011 million people in the world below even this basic subsistence level. When the numbers were checked up for 2011, their numbers had shrunk by 24 million, to 987 million (not 700 million). It is a small drop. But for the first time the number of those poor has slid to less than 1 billion. It is a telling piece of statistic.

That is, as far as the numbers take the story.

But since then, the big question for the Bank has been whether the sub-billion slide is permanent or would the number of poor inflate.

The Bank has also been poring over a very interesting piece of data from India. Jettisoning a 30-year-old statistical construct, India's National Sample Survey Organisation used a "modified mixed reference period", shifting to a new scale to measure poverty. The result was dramatic for lowest income groups.

The Indian scale now asks respondents to recall a week's food consumption data instead of that for a month. The new scale shows that the poorest form 12.4% of the Indian population eking out life below the $1.25 PPP index. The NSSO has argued that this measure is more accurate, but the Bank has its doubts. "This year's estimate of 12.4% will set the baseline for future Indian and global poverty estimates, one consequence of which will be a break in the global series."

However, the effect of the new measurement scale on global poverty measurement has been dramatic. Since India accounts for disproportionately more of the poorest in the

world, the Bank finds that the total number of people climbing to a higher income/consumption has expanded virtuously. There are, of course, grounds for assuming so.

Since 1990, the global poverty rate has fallen by approximately 1 percentage point a year, mostly due to rapid poverty reduction in China and India. In fact, though India was home to the largest number of poor in 2012, "its poverty rate is one of the lowest among those countries with the largest number of poor."
In other words, they are above the $1.90 watermark.

But does it still dip the global number by 300 million, including about a 100 million from India? The Bank is obviously aware that this is a massively rosy picture. This is the reason why it has been squeamish about accepting the entire drop. The changes are consequently shown as "tentative projections"—the calculations are kept aside for the moment. When next year's dataset arrives, it would be the right time to check up on the numbers.

BUSINESS STANDARD, OCT 15, 2015
Nitin Desai: Are poverty percentages useful?
Angus Deaton's Nobel Prize should spark off more research on the measurement and usefulness of poverty percentages
Nitin Desai

The trouble with corporate myopiaA more responsible politicsWhat should India offer at Paris?What we need from ParisThe wrong land war

A recent report prepared for this year's annual IMF-World Bank meeting gave a much lower figure for the incidence of poverty in India than what is commonly cited — 12.4 per cent in 2011-12 rather than the official figure of 21.1 per cent. The bank's poverty line works out to roughly Rs 32,000 per capita per year, which is 1,000 to 2,000 times Dadabhai Naoroji's 150-year-old estimate of Rs 16 to Rs 35 per capita per year based on the diet of "emigrant coolies during their voyage living in a state of quietude". The flourishing academic industry of poverty estimation has produced many estimates of the poverty line and thepoverty percentage in between these two landmarks. This award of

this year's economics Nobel to Angus Deaton, who made major contributions to this debate, will undoubtedly inspire a fresh round of researchers on this measurement issue.

Is this poverty percentage really useful? If a painstaking survey establishes that village "x" has a poverty incidence of 30 per cent and village "y" of 20 per cent, will it make any difference to the development actions in these villages? Do we identify poor households by trying to find out what their consumption level was in money terms, or do we use more directly observed criteria as is the case 13 criteria as is the case below-poverty-line (BPL) identification in government schemes which require it? Has it ever been used for monitoring the impact of specific anti-poverty schemes? Frankly, the only practical use that has been made of these numbers, outside the sphere of academic discourse, is for propaganda by political parties when the number shows a significant drop during their period in office.

This obsession with poverty estimation does reflect a major concern for public policy. Our Constitution made the bold move to have universal suffrage in a poor, largely illiterate, culturally diverse, and profoundly hierarchical society. The repeated exercise of this universal suffrage and the spread of mass communication have empowered the poor and the disadvantaged. It has compelled all governments to recognise the need to address exclusion from the growth process (poverty), from new work opportunities (unemployment), from the mainstream of politics (marginalisation), from social intercourse (discrimination) and from safety nets (vulnerability).

However, the outcome of public policy in terms of inclusion is disappointing because investment for growth and expenditures for poverty reduction have proceeded on parallel tracks that never met. We need to recognise that growth is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for addressing poverty and unemployment. Trickle-down is slow and the scale of the required increase in income in lower income groups is such that relying on trickle-down without redistribution would involve a large increase in higher incomes and widen disparities between rich and poor households — and, more dangerously, between rich and poor regions. We need development interventions and political engagement that address all the dimensions of exclusion more directly.

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A recent report on chronic poverty1 contains a longitudinal analysis of poverty based on panel data for the socialist 1970s and for the next two decades, which saw a clear transition to free market capitalism. In both periods, about 25 per cent of the panel households remained in poverty and around 40 per cent were not poor either at the beginning or the end. The remaining households had either gotten out or slipped into poverty over this period. The interesting part is that in the '70s, this third group crossing the poverty line consisted of one-third who had slipped into poverty and two-third who got out. The split in the more capitalist 1980s and 1990s was less favourable in that a more than half the crossover group – more precisely 20 per cent of all households – had slipped into poverty.

Public policy to help poor households must focus not just on BPL households but also on those who run the risk of slipping into poverty if they are hit by some major crisis. The support must be organised on three tracks — widening income and employment options for poor households and stagnating regions, investing in quality public services, particularly for health, education, skill development and environmental services, and providing a security net for the vulnerable households.

About 80 per cent of the households counted as poor belong to socially disadvantaged Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, have little or no asset base and few skills. Opportunity for them and their children means occupational mobility and migration that allows them to tap into employment opportunities thrown up by the growth process. This will not happen without public policies to provide skill development, financial inclusion and other measures that will facilitate occupational and geographical mobility. Nor will it happen if the current tolerance of violence against outsiders, dissenters and minorities continues.

Delivering assistance to households and individuals is not enough. The provision of quality public services, (and the key word here is "quality") for education, health and water supply is as important. Inequalities in the access to these are far worse than income inequalities. As for vulnerability, the state must provide safety nets for poor and near-poor households, facing a sudden burden, say of health expenditure or an unexpected loss of income because of a drought or market turbulence.

All this is well-known and anti-poverty goals and programmes have figured in all Five-Year Plans, but more as add-on palliatives except briefly in the 1970s. As the prime concern of policy shifts towards the "Ease of Doing Business", "Make in India" and attracting foreign direct investment, the subsidiarity of anti-poverty strategies to other goals will be even more pronounced.

This is where a rights-based approach can help. Some of the development-centred rights are enshrined in specific legislation, and some are protected by the generous interpretation of the right to life by the Supreme Court. Today the only available path to social democracy is the combination of civil society organisations championing the rights of disadvantaged individuals and communities and an activist judiciary enforcing them. Hopefully we will in time get what we really need: A social democratic party rooted in mass movements of the underprivileged.

1. India Chronic Poverty Report, Aasha Kapur Mehta, Andrew Shepherd, Shashank Bhide, Amita Shah, Anand Kumar, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 2011.

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Economics Nobel winner strong critic of India's poverty line
By Partha Sinha & Srikant Tripathy

It's not only collaboration with Indians and on India, the Princeton professor even had a tiff with Arvind Panagariya, former Columbia University professor and now the deputy chief of Niti Aayog.

MUMBAI/JAIPUR: Angus Deaton, the Scottish-American Princeton professor who won the Economics Nobel on Monday "for his analysis of consumption, poverty, and welfare", has a strong India connect with several of his academic papers and articles focused on the country and based on data collected here. Deaton (69) has worked with Jean Dreze of Delhi School of Economics, Abhijit Banerjee of MIT and Jishnu Das of World Bank on areas like poverty, healthcare, nutrition, etc. Even his homepage on Princeton website lists 'Poverty in the world and in India' as one of the Nobel winner's main areas of research.

It's not only collaboration with Indians and on India, the Princeton professor even had a tiff with Arvind Panagariya, former Columbia University professor and now the deputy

chief of Niti Aayog, about the reasons behind the shorter height of Indian children compared to the global average. Deaton is also a harsh critique of the measure of poverty line used by the [Indian government](#) that was a hot topic two years ago.

One of Deaton's leading works, along with MIT's Banerjee and Esther Duflo, and Das from World Bank, was based on a healthcare-related survey of tribal households in Udaipur, then one of the poorest districts in the country. In 2002 and 2003, Deaton and others worked on a survey-based project titled 'Health Care Delivery in Rural Rajasthan'. Seva Mandir, an Udaipur-based NGO that works for integrated rural development in the district, was involved in the project as the local facilitator and coordinator.

According to Priyanka Singh, CEO, Seva Mandir, Deaton visited Udaipur twice and had gone to the villages to have first-hand experience of the situation there. "He was very sound on subjects of nutrition and health. During interactions, we found he could explain difficult things in a very simple way," said Singh.

Deaton, Banerjee and others' survey of 100 hamlets in Udaupir threw up interesting results — like low level of immunization in rural areas, absence of government-sponsored healthcare facility, reliance on private healthcare even at a much higher cost, etc — some of which have strong relevance even today.

A few years ago, Deaton had an academic debate with Panagariya on the reasons for shorter height of Indian children. The article by Deaton and others in the Economic and Political Weekly points out that Indian children are very short, on average, compared to children living in other countries. "Because height reflects early life health and net nutrition, and because good early life health also helps brains to grow and capabilities to develop, widespread growth faltering is a human development disaster. Panagariya while acknowledges these facts had argued in (another) article that Indian children are particularly short because they are genetically programmed to be so," the article had pointed out.

Deaton is also a strong critic of how India fixes its poverty line, the estimated minimum income required for basic necessities of life. "Indian poverty is measured using a series of household surveys, run by India's National Sample Survey. The results of these surveys have been subject to intense debate in recent years. There are also significant questions about the appropriateness of the poverty lines used by the Government of India. Finally, the Indian consumer price indexes used in the poverty calculations have also been questioned," the Nobel laureate wrote on his home page.

PRIME MINISTERS

ASIAN AGE, OCT 12, 2015
Communist leader Oli is elected Nepal's new PM

Nepal's Parliament Sunday chose communist leader K.P. Sharma Oli as Prime Minister, tasked with unifying the quake-hit country after a new Constitution triggered deadly protests, a border blockade and a nationwide fuel shortage.

Mr Oli, of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), defeated by 338 votes to 249 former Premier Sushil Koirala, who stepped down from the top job as required by the Constitution adopted on September 20.

Mr Oli is tasked with quelling protests over the new Constitution and ending the blockade which has led to national fuel rationing, and pushing ahead with reconstruction after the earthquake in April killed thousands.

"My request is all the parties must work together and move forward in consensus," Mr Oli said. PM Modi congratulated Mr Oli and invited him to India

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ECONOMIC TIMES OCT 8, 2015
Promoting e-Governance - Sabka vikas MSTC ke saath

"Since last few years, a large number of initiatives have been undertaken by various State governments and Central Ministries to usher in an era of e-government."
By SK Tripathi

This is a year to reckon with for the Indian sub continent. Since last few years, a large number of initiatives have been undertaken by various State governments and Central Ministries to usher in an era of e-government, which have now actually started taking shape. The initiative had become imperative to bring in transparency & accountability. Sustained efforts have been made at multiple levels to improve the delivery of public services and simplify the process of accessing them. It is a proud moment for us to see e governance touching the lives of people of India in a big way.

e-Governance in India has steadily evolved from computerization of Government Departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of Governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency. Lessons from previous e-Governance initiatives have played an important role in shaping the progressive strategies for the country. The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), takes a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country, integrating them into a collective vision and a shared cause. Around this idea, a massive countrywide infrastructure reaching down to the remotest of villages is evolving, and large-scale digitization of records is taking place to enable easy and reliable access over the internet. The ultimate objective is to bring public services closer to home of citizens.

Vision statement of NeGP clearly lays down:

"Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets, and ensure efficiency, transparency, and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man".

Application of Information Technology (IT) for delivering government services, exchange of information, business transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-customer (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government framework is becoming imperative for economic progress in today's world. Through e-governance, government services will be made available to citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. The three main target groups that can be distinguished in governance concepts are government, citizens and businesses/interest groups. The benefits of e-governance are as follows:

1. Speed - Technology makes communication speedier. Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication.

2. Cost Reduction - Most of the government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the government.

3. Transparency - Use of IT makes governing process transparent. All the information of the Government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. But this is only possible when every piece of information of the Government is uploaded on the internet and is available for the public to peruse.

4. Accountability - Once the governing process is made transparent, the government is automatically made accountable. Accountability is answerability of the government to the people and people to the government. It is the answerability for the deeds of the government, point to point linked to the deeds of the citizens. An accountable government is a responsible government and vice-versa.

E-Governance involves access to government information and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in a way that is focused on the needs of the citizens. E-Governance relies heavily on the effective use of Internet and other emerging technologies to receive and deliver information and services easily, quickly, efficiently and inexpensively. E-Governance helps simplify processes and makes access to government information easier. The other anticipated benefits of e-governance include efficiency in services, improvement in service delivery, standardization of services, better accessibility of services, and more transparency and accountability. It is convenient and cost?effective for the Government also in terms of data storage and access to the stored data. The government benefits from reduced duplication of work. In addition, the processes of data collection, analysis and audit are simplified, and become less tedious. Another cherished goal of e?governance is greater citizen participation in the governance of the country as information would be accessible to all.

How is e-governance important in the context of India? The answer may be found in the following lines quoted from late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, "Delivery of services to citizens is considered a primary function of the government. In a democratic nation of over one billion people like India, e-Governance should enable seamless access to information and seamless flow of information across the state and central government in the federal set up. No country has so far implemented an e-governance system for one billion people. It is a big challenge for us".

India has since the last decade made rapid strides in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The growth of e governance in India has coincided with the growth of MSTC as a major player in providing e commerce services, one of the major steps towards achieving full scale e-governance. MSTC being the pioneer in the e-commerce sector has been instrumental in showing the way for adopting e-governance to many pivotal offices of the government of India. MSTC's e-commerce systems include

provision of online services, e-administration and e?services together constituting what is generally termed e-government.

Some of the major achievements of e-governance through MSTC e-Commerce platform are   :

- e-auction of Coal Mines---history was created by successfully auctioning 29 and allocating 38(total 67) coal mining blocks to various sector. This is likely to fetch Rs 3.35 lakh crores of revenue to various State Governments in a span of lease periods.
- Global e-Tender cum e-Auction in Multi -Currency of Red Sander Wood valuing Rs 850 crore. It was e auctioned through MSTC e-platform

- e-Auction of Timber in State of Kerala-Introduction of e-Auction for sale of Forest timber & Sandal wood in the State of Kerala was a major step forward in the bringing in transparency in this field as well, increasing revenues for the Government and ensuring equitable distribution of resources for the business as well as for the public for building homes.
- e-Auction of Fly Ash- from Thermal Power Plant has given an impetus in the cement industry which uses 30-40% Fly Ash for cement making. It was a major achievement towards alleviating a major environmental hazard.

- e-Auction for disbursing Gas subsidy for revival of Stranded Gas based Power Plants----Ministry of Power engaged MSTC to conduct these e auction for revival of underutilized & Stranded Gas Based power plants in India.

- e-Procurement services for promoting Transparency & fair practices-to enable CPSUs & State PSUs in line with Government resolve to implement end-to-end e-procurement in the country. Introduction of e- bidding in Defence alone is likely to give savings of thousands of crore in revenue as well as in terms of manpower and time of procurement of general & Ordinance Depot items.

It is hence our endeavor to make a difference in the lives of the people, by bringing in technological advancement through a smart way. We look forward to achieving a utopian world where there is transparency and accountability for the citizens of India.

We in MSTC want to fulfill the vision of our Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi who declared:

" e-Governance is the only way to move from good governance to proactive pro people good governance".

MSTC in its own way though its e commerce system is improving the economy of the country & alleviating poverty. This is being achieved silently by strengthening the Government and making more revenues available for the developmental projects for the poor-- In a way, making a better, transparent and ethical India, every passing day. Sabkha vikash, MSTC ke saath !!

RAILWAYS

BUSINESS LINE, OCT 13, 2015
Rlys online catering is now branded Food-on-Track

Demand soars as IRCTC links service to stations instead of trains

Guess what? If you are passing through one of the 45 stations of Indian Railways, you can now place order for food through an SMS or through IRCTC online.

Railways food bookings have soared after IRCTC linked e-catering to stations instead of trains. On Sunday, IRCTC got online orders for 1,000 meals against the earlier trend of 80-90 meals a day.

Earlier, e-catering used to receive daily orders totalling an average of 80-90 meals, while this has recently more than doubled after it was introduced as a station-based facility, according to a release.

Initially, this was a service offered only to passengers travelling through trains. Towards September end, Railways threw open the food-on-track service to all passengers on trains passing through 45 stations.

The station-based 'Food On Track facility will be available for all trains passing through the 45 stations: Howrah, New Delhi, Chennai Central, Mumbai Central, Delhi, Bangalore City, Patna, Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, Madurai, Amritsar, Thiruvananthapuram Central, Kanpur Central, Allahabad, Chandigarh, Gorakhpur, Sealdah, Guwahati, New Jalpaiguri, Vishakhapatnam, Mughalsarai, Varanasi, Jaipur, Bilaspur, Kharagpur, Anand Vihar, H. Nizamuddin, Ludhiana, Secunderabad, Tirupati, Vijayawada, Chennai Egmore, Ernakulam, Kozhikode, Thrisur, Yasvantpur, Nagpur, Pune, Agra Cantt, Gwalior, Jhansi, Bhopal, Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara

While IRCTC has also roped in many partners, Sunday was clearly Domino Pizza's day, as the Jubilant FoodWorks pizza delivery service brand accounted for 700 of the 1,000 online meals ordered. This is according to sources in the know.

Partners of IRCTC include Dominos Pizza, KFC and Travel Food Services (who will take charge of Biryani Bhai, Copper Chimney, Curry Kitchen, Masala Kitchen, Desi Treat and Cafe Chino) and Punjab Grill will deal with the street foods section.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated October 13, 2015)

BUSINESS LINE, OCT 8, 2015
1,030-cr bonanza for 12.58 lakh Railway staff

About 12.58 lakh non-gazetted railway employees are expected to get up to □8,975 as a productivity-linked bonus.

The Cabinet has approved a Railway Ministry proposal to pay bonus equivalent to 78 days' pay, with a wage ceiling of ☐3,500 a month. This will involve an outgo of ☐1,030 crore.

The bonus covers all non-gazetted railway employees, said an official statement, but excludes the railway police.

Between 2010-11 and 2013-14, railway officials had received the same bonus amount, equivalent to 78 days' pay, with a wage ceiling of ☐3,500.

The employee unions are not particularly elated and have continued demanding removal of the wage ceiling.

The All-India Railwaymen's Federation has written to Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu thanking him for announcing 78 days' pay for the year 2014-15, but demanding removal of the ceiling of ☐3,500.

Another union — National Federation of Indian Railwaymen — has also sought removal of the wage ceiling of ☐3,500.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, OCT 9, 2015
Suresh Prabhu for transparent accounting for Indian Railways

Railway minister Suresh Prabhu has stressed the need for a systemic approach in developing an integrated IT-enabled accounting architecture for the national transporter

Railway minister Suresh Prabhu has stressed the need for a systemic approach in developing an integrated IT-enabled accounting architecture for the national transporter, with a clear focus on measurement of outputs and outcomes of operational activities while formulating the budget.

Speaking at a workshop jointly organised by the World Bank and the Indian Railways (IR) in New Delhi, Prabhu said focus is required on the determination of cost of services with an aim to determine a rational pricing structure for the railways. The proposed accounting framework would provide greater transparency and promote good governance, he added. The workshop was part of concerted efforts by the ministry to implement an accrual system of accounting as announced in the FY16 Railway Budget.

On waitlist? Railways to allot seat in next train
V Ayyappan

Once the project gets the go-ahead and becomes operational, passengers will be given the option to complete their journey on different trains.

CHENNAI: Booking train tickets this festive season will be a bit easier with the railways providing the option to shift waitlisted tickets from one train to the next on which seats/ berths are available.

The 'Alternate Trains Accommodation Scheme' (Vikalp), will be launched on November 1. Under the present system, passengers are allowed to book on one train at a time and waitlisted tickets do not gurantee a seat. It often has to be cancelled. The new system allows a passenger to select alternative trains they wish to travel while booking tickets. The option will be available also for passengers travelling from stations which are not origins or destinations.

Some of the premier trains operated from Chennai such as Chennai-Madurai Pandian Express and Tamil Nadu Express to New Delhi have more than 300 passengers on the waitlist during holiday seasons. Beyond a limit, the railways doesn't allow reservation and allots only open tickets. Thus long-distance travellers are forced to reserve on multiple trains and wait for confirmation.

The new system works well for the passenger and the railways: It gives the passenger a hassle-free experience of booking just once; the railways gets to fill seats of special trains in a more streamlined manner. A circular sent out by Railway Board to zonal railways said that the scheme as suggested by Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS) "will be implemented across mail / express trains of the same category, and no extra charges shall be taken from passengers, and no refund shall be provided for the difference of fares". Separate seats will not be earmarked for the scheme.

A senior official said the railways is preparing a list of trains and stations to be covered under the scheme. "On most occasions, passengers do not prefer to travel by special trains. Though new trains are introduced, several passengers continue to prefer a few popular trains. We will now be able to shift waitlisted passengers from a scheduled train to a special one."

Passengers welcomed the move as it promises confirmed berths or seats. Arun Pandian, a

frequent traveller, said, "Some of the long-distance now run with empty coaches. An example is Dehra Dun-Madurai Express via Chennai that often runs with several of its compartments vacant. People prefer Pandian Express which has a long waitlist. The new scheme will help seats in such trains get filled, reducing the holiday rush."

TRANSPORT

Trucks entering Delhi to pay green charge: SC
KRISHNADAS RAJAJGOPAL

The Supreme Court has ordered that all light and commercial vehicles passing through Delhi be made to pay an environment compensation charge (ECC), declaring that Delhi residents have suffered enough from the sly efforts of polluting commercial vehicles to skip higher toll tax on alternative routes.

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India H.L. Dattu reasoned that ECC along with the toll tax would deter commercial traffic travelling from north India towards Jaipur and onwards from opting for the city's roads, choking the residents. The court noted that toll roads NH 71 and NH 71A, connecting Rewari and Panipat via Jhajjar and Rohtak are alternative routes which obviate the need to travel through Delhi. But the truckers avoid them to save tax.

"Thus, apart from the MCD toll, it was necessary to impose ECC to equalise the difference in cost in travelling through alternative routes," the apex court observed in the seven-page order dated October 9 and uploaded on Monday on the Supreme Court official website.

The court directed the Delhi Government to immediately issue a notification to levy the charge, which would be operative for a period of four months starting from November 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, on an experimental basis.

It said this order would override any order to the contrary by any authority. The apex court posted the case on February 3, 2016, to review implementation of the mechanism.

The court fixed the tariffs in two categories. Light duty vehicles and two-axle trucks would pay Rs. 700, while three-axle, four-axle trucks and above would pay Rs.1,300. Passenger vehicles, ambulances and vehicles carrying essential commodities such as food stuffs and oil tankers, would be exempted from payment.

"The charge will be collected by the toll operators without any deduction and handed over to the Delhi government every Friday. The Delhi government shall furnish accounts of the receipts and the expenditure incurred to Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control)) Authority [EPCA] and to this court each quarter," the court directed.

Making the governments of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to share responsibility with Delhi, the court directed them to provide large-size billboards at their exits pointing

commercial traffic to the diversions and take steps to avoid traffic jams or other inconveniences.

The court also ordered the Delhi government to install CCTV cameras at nine of the total 127 entry points and organise surprise visits to oversee the ECC collections.

Light duty vehicles and two-axle trucks to pay Rs. 700, while three-axle, four-axle trucks and above shell out Rs.1,300.

WOMEN

DECCAN HERALD, OCT 9, 2015
State hikes job quota for women to 33%

The Karnataka government has hiked the reservation for women in government jobs to 33 per cent from the present 30 per cent.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's had committed in the current year's budget to increase women's job quotas by three percentage points. The legislature committee on women and child welfare headed by Congress MLA Malikayya Guttedar had recommended the hike.

Of the 5.56 lakh government employees in the State, 1.60 lakh are women.

The government order to this effect issued on September 11, was gazetted on September 14. The Karnataka Civil Services Rules, 1978 have been amended to increase the job quota for women. Prior to that, the government had invited suggestions and objections from the public and given 15 days time.

The government has not specified any date for implementing the order.

Guttedar said the government had not received any objections. Hence, all departments would be directed to implement the revised rules, he added.

Gujarat made a similar revision in women's job quota in October 2014. There is no reservation for women in central government jobs.

Karnataka has reserved 50 per cent seats for women in elections to local bodies, including the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. But there is no such reservation yet in the legislature and Parliament elections. Here, the reservation is based on caste.