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CIVIL SERVICE

BUSINESS STANDARD, SEP 2, 2015

A K Bhattacharya: Three finance secretaries in 15 months

Facts should speak for themselves. The Narendra [Modi government](#) has just completed 15 months. In this period, relatively short in the life of a government, it has already seen three home secretaries, three [finance secretaries](#) and two foreign secretaries.

Anil Goswami, whom the present regime had inherited from the United Progressive Alliance government, had to go on leave early this year in a manner that was both abrupt and controversial. In came L C Goyal, a 1979-batch Indian Administrative Service officer, who was till then heading the rural development ministry, to steer the ministry of home affairs. Last Monday, Mr Goyal sought voluntary retirement, a request that was immediately accepted by the government. The new incumbent is Rajiv Mehrishi, who was due to retire that very day and was given a two-year term as the home secretary. For Mr Mehrishi, it was a short walk from one end of North Block to the other end. Both the finance and home ministries are headquartered in North Block.

Across the road, in South Block, secretarial reshuffles have been no less dramatic. Within days of the Republic Day celebrations early this year when US President [Barack Obama](#) was the chief guest, there was a change of guard in the external affairs ministry. [Sujatha Singh](#) had to quit as foreign secretary and make way for S Jaishankar, who returned from the US where he was India's ambassador. The controversy over her exit has died down even as the new foreign secretary has taken charge of the ministry with his competent handling of the government's external relations. But the way the present government has dealt with appointments of [civil servants](#) remains to be a cause for concern. Consider how Sunil Arora, who was brought in from Rajasthan to lead the newly created skills development ministry as its secretary last year, has now been sent to the information and broadcasting ministry as its secretary. And guess who has replaced Mr Arora? Rohit Nandan, who headed [Air India](#) for the last four years amidst many controversies.

Back in North Block, the finance ministry too has seen some high-profile exits. Arvind

Mayaram was the finance secretary when the Modi government was formed. But Mr Mayaram did not last very long. In the space of a few days, his next posting was changed more than once, leaving him and everybody else a bit confused. By the end of October 2014, [Rajiv Mehrishi](#) was brought in from Rajasthan to head the finance ministry. But little attention was paid to the fact that his date of retirement was less than a year away. In other words, a new finance secretary was chosen with the clear knowledge that he would practically have only one Budget to handle.

But who could have anticipated the Modi government's plan for Mr Mehrishi? He was sent to the home ministry as secretary with a two-year term, making way for a new finance secretary – the third in the last 15 months. R P Watal, who heads the department of expenditure, will be the new finance secretary since he is senior to all other secretaries in the finance ministry.

A new government is always entitled to build its own team of civil servants in key positions. For instance, it chose to continue with the incumbent cabinet secretary, Ajit K Seth, when it came to power in May 2014. But in June this year it opted for a change by appointing Power Secretary [Pradeep Kumar Sinha](#) with a two-year term to succeed Mr Seth. But what happened in the home ministry or in the finance ministry raises many questions about whether the government believes in the importance of team-building and stability at the level of secretaries in key departments.

Soon after the formation of the new government, [Shaktikanta Das](#) was elevated to head the revenue department in June 2014. In October and November that year, three key decisions were taken – bringing in Mr Mehrishi to replace Mr Mayaram as the finance secretary, inducting [Hasmukh Adhia](#) as secretary in the department of financial services and appointing [Aradhana Johri](#) as secretary in charge of the disinvestment department. With [R P Watal](#) as expenditure secretary, a new team at the helm of the finance ministry appeared to have been set up.

But in less than a year, that team appears to be disintegrating. Mr Mehrishi has already left the finance ministry. Mr Watal will be retiring next February and Ms Johri too will reach her age of superannuation six months later. Expect, therefore, new faces at the helm

of the key departments in the finance ministry in the next one year, almost at the same rate that one has seen in the last twelve months.

The government will argue that such changes are inevitable because of the very nature of the civil service, where most secretaries reach retirement age before they can complete a year or two at the helm of a ministry. The other argument would be that civil servants are trained in a manner that even though there may be frequent changes, continuity is provided by a strong and stable network of mid-level bureaucrats who enjoy a longer stint in the same ministry.

Yet, it is undeniable that longer tenure for secretaries makes a big positive difference to governance. In the 1990s, the finance ministry had a top team that remained virtually the same for about six years, without any change in the finance secretary or the chief economic advisor. That long uninterrupted tenure surely helped economic policy formulation in those years, and history is proof of that record.

It is true that securing such longish tenure for top civil servants in the finance ministry would be difficult in the current situation. But certainly a start can be made by giving a minimum term of two years for occupants of the top three secretaries' posts in the finance ministry – those in charge of the departments of economic affairs, revenue and expenditure. If two-year terms can be given to the cabinet secretary and secretaries in a few ministries, including those for home and defence, surely the same privilege can be extended to the finance ministry. Such reforms, mercifully, would not need any legislative sanction and are not likely to face any roadblock in Parliament.

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP 7, 2015

Home Secretary LC Goyal exit: Anant Kumar Singh tipping point after frequent run-ins

By [Aman Sharma](#)

ET spoke to multiple officials in government to get a view of a ministry divided into warring camps for 6 months leading to Goyal's exit.

NEW DELHI: Sometime in June, [Rajnath Singh](#) was quite impressed when then Home Secretary LC Goyal mentioned to him an idea that an Army cantonment should be notified in the Naxal hotbed of Bastar - not for Army operations - but just for presence to act as deterrent to [Naxalites](#) and spur development.

"Yeh baat to sidhe mere gale utar gayi hai...proposal baniye," Singh told him. On August 21, it was a different and a visibly upset Singh telling Goyal to withdraw his order that took away a key division from an additional secretary, [Anant Kumar Singh](#), a trusted confidant of the minister. Goyal told Singh that doing do would weaken and undermine his position but he would still do it the same day since the minister was so upset.

Just about a week later, at his 17 Akbar Road residence, Singh was trying to drop subtle hints to Goyal of replacing him. A clear message from PMO came the next morning and Goyal was out last Monday. "Goyal is honest and competent - no question. But he was not fitting in the scheme of things," a Rajnath aide claims.

ET spoke to multiple officials in government to get a view of a ministry divided into warring camps for 6 months leading to Goyal's shocking exit. None of them spoke on the record. Goyal did not participate in this story. But a person close to Goyal did tell ET: "He still does not know the reason why he was sacked."

GOYAL'S ENTRY

The government had just about 48 hours to look for Anil Goswami's replacement in February after his name embarrassingly cropped up for favouring a accused in [Saradha Chit Fund](#) scam. The priority was to find a 'clean as a lily' officer - Goyal, with his experience of working in MHA as a joint secretary, was a clear choice.

A month before Goyal's arrival, Anant, an officer 5 years junior to him, had joined as additional secretary. Anant was personal secretary to Singh when he was UP CM from 2000-2002 and [Union Surface Transport Minister](#) in 1999. Anant had charge of Centre-State, Union Territory and Police-I divisions.

Tensions between both were immediate. Goyal is said to have objected to such concentration of powerful divisions under one AS. "Goyal was of the view that given the perception that Anant was close to HM, there was a situation of conflict of interest. He thought it was unfair to the other ASs," a senior MHA official told ET. But Goyal exercised caution and did not touch Anant instantly.

ANANT HAS RAJNATH'S EAR

"He is one of the finest IAS officers...," a minister in the MHA says of Anant, who has also been moved out by PMO. Officials in the Home Minister's Office (HMO) speak of Singh's complete trust in Anant's judgment and political understanding of issues. "Goyal on the other hand was bookish and gave standard bureaucratic responses. When Anant tried to give his suggestions and views, Goyal rebuffed them. Work had started to stagnate," a [HMO official](#) said. ET has learnt that the situation led to two parallel channels reporting to HM - one of Goyal, more through files than in person, and other of Anant and a key HMO officer working in tandem.

Officials speak of tensions between Goyal and Anant reflecting on files that pertained to the latter's divisions -- plus the HMO official had also taken up cudgels against Goyal. "The personal connect between Goyal and the minister literally broke down. The HS felt the minister was being influenced by his advisors - some joint secretaries had no direct access to the minister," an MHA official said.

GOYAL IN THICK OF ACTION

Many say a plethora of sensitive issues handled by Goyal also contributed to his exit. Goyal refused security clearance to Sun Network, much to the chagrin of [Arun Jaitley](#). But both HMO officials and those close to Goyal say PMO was backing Goyal's stand on Sun TV. If PM wanted to give the clearance, MHA wouldn't have withheld permission but the PM didn't want to invite SC scrutiny at a later stage, officials say.

Goyal was also under pressure to stop Ford Foundation's India operations and cancel FCRA license of NGOs of Teesta Setalvad. But officials say PMO, in light of mounting US pressure on India, "belatedly appreciated" Goyal's stand of not going overboard on [Ford Foundation](#) and giving them a way out by registering under FEMA. "Goyal had also not said no to cancelling the FCRA licenses of Setalvad's NGOs. It is under process," an official said. Goyal did complain to Singh and NSA [Ajit Doval](#) on MHA being kept out of Naga negotiations.

Though some in HMO express unhappiness over Goyal dragging his feet on spending funds, the spend of budget funds by MHA till August is in fact 9% more than in same period last year. PMO was also pleased with Goyal over streamlining the process of security clearances for [investments](#) for PM's 'Ease of Business' model.

THE EVENTS OF AUGUST

So did the events of August cost Goyal? Rajnath approved a CBI inquiry in the Le Meridian matter into the role of a former NDMC Chairman [Jalaj Shrivastava](#) around August 22. This was after [Anant Kumar](#) wanted a CBI inquiry immediately while Goyal wanted the same after seeking comments of the new NDMC Chief. "HM did not want any delay. He is a stickler of being intolerant for any corruption," an aide said.

The tipping point was Goyal's step to re-allocate work among additional secretaries on August 21.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 2, 2015

Modi's shuffled babus get a big dose of reality

DK Singh

When the official announcement of Home Secretary LC Goyal's removal came on Monday afternoon, over a dozen bureaucrats were attending a farewell party for

additional secretary Tuk Tuk Kumar at Transport Bhavan in the capital. There was a stunned silence when one of them broke the news of Goyal's ouster. They were used to the whims and fancies of their political masters but seldom did the steel frame feel so shaken.

Welcome in earnest to the Narendra Modi regime. If the 'Babudom' felt bored by the 'Chalta hai' attitude of the previous UPA dispensation, the NDA brought a whiff of fresh air. After a long time, the bureaucrats found their voice with the Prime Minister engaging them directly, sometimes even keeping the ministers at bay. They could write directly to the PM, even if only in 300 characters.

When Skill Development minister Rajiv Pratap Rudy got a new secretary, Sunil Arora, in his ministry, he was not thrilled. The two were certainly not the best of friends when Rudy was civil aviation minister in the Atal Behari Vajpayee government and Arora was CMD, Indian Airlines. The message from the PMO was clear: let bygones be bygones and start afresh.

Last year, Rajiv Mehrishi -- now home secretary -- was sprung from his job as chief secretary in Vasundhara Raje's government in Rajasthan by a senior Union minister. Few had any clues about his destination, the finance ministry, and eyebrows were also raised because Modi was poaching an official close to a CM he has been cool towards.

But, predictability has never defined the Modi sarkar. Nobody could anticipate the official announcement about Durga Prasad's removal as SPG chief when he was in Nepal with the PM looking after his security arrangements. Nor did Foreign secretary Sujatha Singh expect her sudden exit last year. And former Home Secretary Anil Goswami certainly did not expect to be dropped when he made a phone call to the CBI Director to curry favour for an old politician buddy, Matang Sinh, behaviour that used to be considered normal for senior babus.

For all its pusillanimity over politically sensitive moves like the land acquisition ordinance, the NDA regime hasn't lost its authority when it comes to its own senior officials. This is the message that is now getting to the bureaucracy after a honeymoon that got them expecting unbridled power at the cost of their political masters, the ministers. Goyal might have been unhappy about not being informed about Naga peace accord but going to his bosses to register his protest was not necessarily a wise move in

this government. He also refused to give security clearance to Sun TV despite prods from the I&B ministry headed by no less than Arun Jaitley.

Since 1989, an entire generation of bureaucrats has been unused to the idea of a government without multiple power centres or a crippling dependence on allies and partners. Last year's Lok Sabha elections changed that conclusively, but perhaps the usually sharp bureaucracy has been the slowest to grasp the fact. It's time that they organised a powerpoint session on the changed realities; there's no shortage of their former colleagues who could speak eloquently, if a little bitterly, on the subject.

HINDU, SEP 1, 2015

Mehrishi replaces Goyal as Home Secretary

VIJAITA SINGH

Senior IAS officer Rajiv Mehrishi replaced L.C. Goyal as Home Secretary on Monday in the third such change being made by the Modi government in just a year.

Mr. Goyal, who took charge in February, was ordered to seek voluntary retirement on Monday, barely hours before Mr. Mehrishi was to retire as Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs.

By evening, in what could be a consolation for Mr. Goyal, he was appointed Chairman of the Indian Trade Promotion Organisation under the Commerce Ministry, a post meant for retired officials.

Currently, an officer of the Additional Secretary rank is holding additional charge of the post.

Sources said Mr. Goyal's removal had been on the cards for the past 15 days, and he was sounded out on Saturday to put in his papers.

On Monday morning, he sent in his resignation to the Cabinet Secretary and did not turn up at his North Block office. Government sources insisted that the order should not be seen as being against Mr. Goyal but in favour of Mr. Mehrishi.

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP 1, 2015

Congress: L C Goyal was forced to seek voluntary retirement

It accused the government of "discarding" and 'dispensing with' processes, showing 'disrespect' to senior civil servants.

Hours after the Prime Minister's Office announced that Home Secretary L C Goyal's request for voluntary retirement has been accepted, the [Congress](#) said the bureaucrat was "forced to seek voluntary retirement" 17 months before the completion of his two-year fixed tenure. It accused the government of "discarding" and "dispensing with" processes, showing "disrespect" to senior civil servants and creating an "atmosphere of uncertainty, fear and distrust".

Congress leader Anand Sharma said Goyal's move to seek information about the Naga accord could be one of the reasons behind his "removal". "This is that mindset which says 'how dare the Home Ministry ask for details about the accord'," he said.

Sharma said senior civil servants, especially secretaries of Home, Foreign and Defence ministries, are unable to discharge their duties in such an atmosphere. He said there is "complete concentration" of powers in the PMO when it comes to "decision making, policy making and key appointments".

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP 1, 2015

New home secretary Rajiv Mehrishi keeps a low-profile but full of energy and gusto

Rajiv Mehrishi kept a low profile during his stint at North Block, but colleagues said he brought in a lot of 'energy and gusto' at work.

NEW DELHI: For the second time in less than 12 months, the NDA government has sprung a surprise through [Rajiv Mehrishi](#). Last October, it brought the 1978-batch IAS officer from his home cadre of Rajasthan to New Delhi to replace [Arvind Mayaram](#) to steer the [Department of Economic Affairs](#), the nerve centre of government's economic policies.

On Monday, the day he was due to retire, the government created an even bigger flutter by appointing Mehrishi home secretary, cutting short incumbent LC Goyal's tenure by over a year, and making the former the first officer in a long time to serve as [finance secretary](#) and home secretary.

Mehrishi kept a low profile during his stint at North Block, but colleagues said he brought in a lot of 'energy and gusto' at work. He was not shy of crossing swords with

RBI officials as he spearheaded the push for an overhaul of the financial sector.

The move may have ruffled a few feathers of those afraid of breaking the conservative mould but Mehrishi has set the course for next generation changes. He advocated a reset of the country's monetary policy through a new framework and creation of a committee.

The Cabinet note for creation of monetary policy committee, which has the buy-in of the RBI, is ready to be taken up any time. Prior to his spell at the finance ministry, Mehrishi served as chief secretary of Rajasthan under CM Vasundhara Raje.

He was reputed to be the key architect of a host of reforms initiated by the Raje government, including changes in the labour and land laws, apart from reconfiguring policies in skills development, [solar energy](#) and PPP-based highway projects.

His association with finance minister [Arun Jaitley](#) dates back to the Vajpayee government when he worked for the then law, justice & company affairs ministry. He was responsible for a great leap forward in use of technology in ensuring online filing by companies.

He was passionate about investor protection with a focus on such things as firms using IPO proceeds for the purpose indicated in their prospectuses.

COMMUNICATION

PIONEER, SEP 7, 2015

MTNL, BSNL TO MERGE IN DEC, GET NEW AVATAR FROM FY 2016

The much-awaited Government plan for merger of two State-owned telecom firms has taken a final shape as Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) are all set to start functioning as a single new entity from the next financial year. The name of the proposed new entity will be declared soon by the Government, while the merger will happen by the end of December. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is working on the issue, and after the merger both the public sector telecom firms will synergise operations by offering their services across the country as a single entity.

“Though the decision on merging BSNL and MTNL is expected to happen by December-end this year, the other pre-merger procedures of the Government will continue till March 31, 2016. The proposed newly-formed entity will start its operation at the beginning of the next financial year in April 2016,” a highly-placed Government source told The Pioneer on Sunday.

The DoT in September last year had set a deadline of July 31, 2015 for closing the merger of MTNL and BSNL. But due to some reason or the other, it couldn't happen on time. Earlier this year, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had requested Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Bangalore, to prepare and submit a feasibility report on the merger of BSNL and MTNL.

"In response to the Government's request, IIM-B, however, has submitted its final report to the PMO on July 16 this year, stating therein how the new organisation would function in the telecom competitiveness at par with the private telcos in the country. Both the DoT and the Government in supervision with the PMO are studying the report to take it forward as to smoothly operate these two PSU units into single telecom firm. The final blueprint in this matter will come to the public domain shortly," the source said.

When contacted about the development, a senior Government functionary involved in the process, however, confirmed the merger plan, but he did not divulge the details about its course of actions. "The Government is studying the IIM-B report and the merger decision will happen in the next 3-4 months as planned," he said. In July, DoT Secretary, Rakesh Garg had also said that it would take 4 to 5 months for the Government to take a final decision on the issue, after receiving the IIM report.

It is learnt that the Government will take a delisting route before the merger of these two PSUs into a single entity. In order to correct the health of these State-owned telecom firms, the Government had three options in hand on its merger plan. One, the delisting the MTNL first and then merge with the BSNL into a single company. Second, the BSNL, MTNL and ITIL (Indian Telephone Industries Limited, a telecom equipment manufacturing PSU firm) to merge into single entity and the third option was to make the MTNL as a subsidiary company of BSNL, according to the sources.

"I think the first option is viable for the Government as the MTNL is a listed company and the Government has to see how it can be merged with BSNL. Concerned with MTNL debt books, the Government may opt for delisting route before the merger. It may first buy back the MTNL shares before the merger and later, it may provide a soft loan to the new entity after merger," it added.

Communications and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had earlier said the BSNL's debt stood at Rs 4,459 crore, while and MTNL's debt book was as high as Rs 14,120 crore at end of the last financial year.

In the post-merger, it is expected that there will a lot of rejig plan for the new entity. "The Government may appoint a new chief for the company. Besides, it is expected that major reshuffling, transfers of some new key executive level positions and recreation of some new positions may happen in due course of time after the merger. All matters on promotion, VRS issue and downsize of employees are also not ruled out in the post-merger," the source said.

However, the Government functionaries believe that, the post-merger will benefit the Government in some way or the other. "Commercially, it will be a plus point for the Government on tax issues. Currently, BSNL is billing MTNL and vice versa for services for which both are paying taxes. If it becomes one entity, the tax outgo will be less," said a senior BSNL official.

CRIME

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 1, 2015

Law panel recommends abolishing death penalty except in terror cases

Avantika Mehta

The Law Commission on Monday recommended abolition of the death penalty in all but terrorism and sedition cases, in line with the “evolving standards of human dignity and decency”, signifying a more nuanced legal approach amid a national debate on capital punishment.

After the issue hit the headlines recently over the execution of 1993 Mumbai blasts convict Yakub Memon, the commission noted that capital punishment failed as a deterrent and it was retributive justice which was “indefensible”, though it must be retained for terrorism-related cases in the interest of national security.

“The notion of ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’ has no place in our constitutionally mediated criminal justice system,” a nine-member panel of the Law Commission said in its 262nd report and added that time had come for India join the 140 countries that have abolished the death penalty, recommending a phased abolition.

Though the government has received the report, the recommendations are not binding on it. Many of the panel’s past reports are gathering dust.

The commission analysed and relied upon many orders from the Supreme Court to confirm its findings that “there exists no principled method to remove such arbitrariness from capital sentencing”. It added that a lack of resources, poor investigations, and ineffective prosecution and legal aid were problems plaguing the judicial system.

“Continued administration of death penalty asks...questions related to the miscarriage of justice, errors, as well as the plight of the poor and disenfranchised in the criminal justice system... administration of death penalty even within the restrictive environment of ‘rarest of rare’ doctrine is constitutionally unsustainable,” it said.

Three of the nine panel members recorded their dissent to the report. Justice (retd) Usha Mehra, a full-time panel member, and both the ex-officio members -- law secretary PK Malhotra and legislative secretary Sanjay Singh -- supported retaining the death penalty.

The commission's head, Justice AP Shah, who retired on Monday, noted in the report that the irreversible punishment was open to human error, even at the stage of clemency and mercy powers.

“Even the exercise of mercy powers is sometimes vitiated by gross procedural violations and non-application of mind,” the report said, adding that “safeguards in the law have failed in providing a constitutionally secure environment for administration of this irrevocable punishment”.

DEFENCE, NATIONAL

ECONOMIC TIMES, SEP 3, 2015

Manohar Parrikar warns DPU officials on 'unnecessary' foreign visits

By [Manu Pubby](#)

The fresh instructions come after Parrikar told PSU CMDs in July to take his personal approval before leaving for a foreign private visit.

NEW DELHI: Cracking a whip on frequent foreign travels by [defence public sector unit](#) personnel on official business, [Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar](#) has warned that such visits should only be undertaken on 'absolute need basis' and in organizational interest. In a stern message, Parrikar has cautioned that 'proposals for foreign tours and visits are being received from DPUs and OFB (Ordnance Factory Board) without sufficient justification' and has asked officials to send details of all proposed visits well in advance to the ministry.

A set of instructions sent on 26 August with Defence Minister's approval, specify that the top level management should undertake foreign visits only when 'serious organisation interest' is involved. "These should be undertaken on absolute need basis and must contribute towards organisation's measurable outcome. The size of the delegation and the duration of the visit must be in accordance with functional necessity," the instructions state.

Sources said that the minister has taken exception to often inflated delegations of PSU officials going abroad for events like expositions, shows and factory visits on the exchequer's expense, without showing concrete results.

The fresh instructions come after Parrikar told PSU CMDs in July to take his personal approval before leaving for a foreign private visit. As reported by ET, while in the past, CMDs could get away with convincing the Secretary Defence Production for such visits, Parrikar instructed that he would personally clear each case for leave for a foreign visit.

[Modi government](#) had laid down new norms after it came into power last year. In the first set of instructions issued in June 2014 on foreign travel of officials, the Cabinet Secretary had warned that PM Modi had expressed his concern on proposals for travel abroad coming in at the last minute. The top babu had also instructed officials to submit a post visit report on the outcome of the tour.

STATESMAN, SEP 3, 2015

Rank & Pension

Govind Bhattacharjee

The nation is presently in the grip of OROP (One Rank One Pension) fever. Several army veterans are fasting unto death, passions are ignited while invectives fly thick and fast.

Emotion is being invoked much more than logic and facts, often misleading the people. Ex-Servicemen complain of inadequate pension due to truncated service and limited job opportunities after compulsory early retirement. No one doubts the truth of any of these grievances, but the issue is more deep-seated. The conjecture on the impact of OROP varies from the extremely conservative to the wildly fanciful, while skirting the precise nature and magnitude of the problem.

OROP implies uniform pension to persons retiring in the same rank with the same length of service irrespective of their dates of retirement. It implies bridging the gap between the rates of pension of current and past pensioners, and also their equalisation in respect of future enhancements in the rates of pension. One should dispel the myth that OROP is an army-specific problem. All paramilitary forces and 99 per cent of the civilian government employees are victims of an unjust system of pension. Barring a handful who have the privilege of retiring at a fixed scale, normally at the top, whether in the army or in the civil administration, all employees suffer from this discrimination.

Pension drawn by any government servant including defence personnel consists of two elements: a basic pension which is fixed at the time of retirement and a relief thereon as and when successive DA instalments are released by the Government based on the consumer price index and the rate of inflation. Central Pay Commissions (CPC) are constituted every 10 years. With every CPC award, enhancement in pay-scales and revised rates of pension are automatically passed on to the past pensioners whose basic salaries at the time of retirement are revised and re-fixed in the new scale of pay and new pension determined accordingly. While some benefits of revision are passed on to retired employees, the problem arises due to the bunching of several old pay-scales into a smaller number of scales in the new pay structure. There would be no disparity in pension if the number of pay-scales and their intermediate stages remained the same. This was the case with the pay-scales of defence forces, which were different from those of civil servants, till the Second Central Pay Commission (CPC) awards (1966-76).

The armed forces enjoyed the OROP till 1976, i.e. before the third CPC (1976-86) took an ex parte decision against the scheme and applied the civilian pension rules to the armed forces pensioners as well. This was the genesis of discrimination between the past and present pensioners. The Third CPC compressed 36 running pay-scales prevalent in government service to only 19 by merging several previous scales into single running scales in the revised pay structure. When a number of pay-scales are merged into a single running pay band, pensions drawn by all “pre-existing pensioners”, who had retired at the old scales, are fixed at the lowest of the pay band into which these old scales are merged.

This is where the problem arises and disparity kicks in between the past and the present pensioners. An officer who is scheduled to retire shortly will obviously draw a higher pay than the same-rank official who had retired 10 years ago.

With the Fourth and Fifth CPC awards, the number of pay-scales again proliferated to 34, but the problem was really aggravated when the 6th CPC (2006-16) reduced it drastically to only nine running pay-bands (PB) by introducing a number of fixed grade-pays within each band; these grade pays did not affect the pension. For example, 26 pay-scales were converted into four PBs, accommodating within a single pay-band (PB-4) a scale of Rs 37,400 - Rs 67,000 of all officers from the level of Lt. Colonel to Major General, making all of them, irrespective of their years of retirement or rank, draw the same basic pension of Rs 18,700 fixed at the lowest of PB-4, and hence less than anyone retiring presently at a higher level within this PB with higher or lower rank. This anomaly also applies to the civilian employees. All past retirees would therefore stand to suffer monetary losses which will amplify with every successive CPC awards, with ever-widening disparity between present and past pensioners.

The resentment of defence forces on the ground of unequal pension is thus understandable, but there is another reason for their sensitivity to this. For armed forces, equality in service has two components, rank and length of service. Rank signifies command, control and responsibility. A soldier is attached to his rank and is allowed to retain it even after retirement. Differential pensions to soldiers retiring in the same rank with equal years of service also creates social inequality between them, apart from financial inequality. Nearly 85 per cent of the armed forces personnel retire below the age of 40; this is necessary to keep our fighting forces young. Even officers retire between 52 and 54 depending on their rank, while all civilian employees retire at the age of 60. A larger service-span allows the civilians more time to rise in the hierarchy and receive higher pension. Such advantages are denied to the armed forces. Though jobs are reserved for ex-servicemen, opportunities are limited. Given the hardships and peculiarities of service conditions of the armed forces, they obviously cannot be equated with civil servants.

For the armed forces personnel, OROP is imperative. Which is why all political parties and five Prime Ministers have been in favour of it, but the demand still remains unaddressed, due primarily to bureaucratic apathy if not disinclination. Bureaucrats, who have to decide on such matters, do not stand to lose; almost every bureaucrat reaches the fixed apex scale of Rs 80,000 at which there is cent per cent equalisation of pension, whereas only the army commanders and the Vice-Chiefs of defence forces draw the apex

scale. The fact that a multiplicity of committees have had to address the issue is in itself a testimony to the inherent difficulties.

On the government's side, the major impediment is, of course, financial. In 2011, the Controller General of Defence Accounts had estimated the additional annual liability on this account at Rs 3000 crore. Today it is estimated to be about Rs 8300 crore annually which may increase to Rs 10000 crore, if the impending Seventh CPC awards are factored in, taking the base year of 2011 for fixing pension, and rolling it out from January 2015. Both points have been contested by army veterans, who want a continuous 'rolling' adjustment of all past pensions with present values which is unrealistic. Given that 60,000 soldiers retire every year, it will be an administrative nightmare to adjust the pensions of some 30 lakh existing defence pensioners on a running basis. Instead, the government's proposal of adjustment once every five years in place of once in every ten years for civilians appears reasonable. The financial implication is probably being exaggerated by bureaucrats and ministry mandarins.

The Central government's total pension expenditure during 2012-13 was Rs 69,479 crore, of which defence pension was Rs 43,368 crore and civil pension Rs 26,111 crore. Both have increased almost equally during the last five years. Factoring in the likely impact of the Seventh CPC, the total pension liability may increase to Rs 88,000 crore. Compare this with the Union Government's subsidy expenditure of Rs 257,179 crore in 2012-13, of which food subsidy was Rs 85,000 crore, fertiliser subsidy Rs 65,808 crore and petroleum subsidy Rs 96,880 crore. Given the falling price of petroleum in the global market, there is some cushion to absorb the excess expenditure of Rs 18,000 crore that OROP is likely to impose, provided the Government curtails subsidy, disinvests its PSUs and implements economic reforms with urgency. If the fiscal deficit of Rs 4.95 lakh crore in 2012-13 did not throw the economy out of gear; the additional burden imposed by OROP will not unsettle it either. The nation should not be seen haggling with veterans who have sacrificed their lives to secure our borders.

TRIBUNE, SEP 7, 2015

OROP not enough: Arrest 'decline in military's status'

That the government has finally accepted the four-decade-old demand for one rank, one pension should come as a relief even though it is not entirely to the satisfaction of ex-soldiers. With Prime Minister Modi clarifying on Sunday that the armed forces personnel retiring prematurely and those disabled would be covered under the OROP, a major irritant has been removed. Many loose ends were left untied in the hurried acceptance of the OROP demand. The Modi government had its political compulsions to make the

announcement before the code of conduct prevented it from reaping political dividends in the Bihar elections. The RSS pressure also had its effect.

The agitating soldiers wisely decided to end the hunger strike. They say they will continue to agitate over pending issues, particularly the levelling of pension once in five years against their demand for annual revision. These issues can be taken up with the proposed judicial committee. Also, Defence Minister Parrikar has said that the formal order may take "15 to 20 days". This means the government has left the door open for changes in the OROP scheme. The Modi government could not afford to be seen as succumbing to pressure from protesters by accepting all their demands, no matter how legitimate. The agitation also highlighted what a few former defence chiefs said in their letter to the President: a steady decline in status of the military and attempts to make the military subservient to the bureaucracy. This perception, right or wrong, must be addressed.

Saturday's announcement was a unilateral decision of the Modi government after back-channel initiatives indicated that there was no meeting ground between what the ex-servicemen were demanding and what the government was willing to concede. With the agitation ex-servicemen must have realised that they are an important electoral constituency which every political party likes to court. Though it was an unhappy sight to see disciplined defence personnel going on hunger strike, they used their strength for their benefit with help from media. The ex-servicemen should now revert to their traditional distance from political partisans.

EDUCATION

DECCAN HERALD, SEP 7, 2015

Centre to set up national board for publication of school books

Prakash Kumar

The Centre plans to set up a national board for publication of school textbooks and also allow higher educational institutions to establish their own units for publication of academic journals and books.

It also proposes to set up publishing units in public private partnership framework to augment the textbook publication capacity to meet the “ever growing” demands and timely supply of books to students.

The Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry is in the process of finalising a new policy for publication and promotion of books with an aim to improve availability, accessibility and quality as well as inculcate book reading habit among students.

Giving its view on the draft policy, the Commerce Ministry has suggested that book publishing should be recognised as a priority sector on the grounds: “(a) It is associated with the educational development of the country, (b) It is a labour intensive industry which provides employment to people from all walks of society.”

During an inter-ministerial consultation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) told the government that book publishing activities were categorised under service sector under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006. “Further, in terms of the RBI’s extant guidelines on lending to priority sector, bank loan up to an aggregate credit limit of Rs 5 crore per unit to micro and small enterprises engaged in providing or rendering of services and defined in terms of investment in equipment under the MSMED Act are eligible to be classified under the priority sector,” RBI added.

To facilitate teaching and learning in mother tongue in schools and colleges, the draft policy proposes to launch a “national mission to give institutional support” to translation and publication of textbooks in Indian languages for students.

“All universities will be encouraged to set up their own publishing facilities,” the draft report said. At present, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) publishes school textbooks. The Central Board of Secondary Education also publishes some books.

If the government goes ahead with its draft policy in its current format, the proposed National Board of School Textbooks (NBST) will take over the responsibility of school

text books. The NCERT's role then will remain limited to providing consultation to the NBST.

The NBST will prepare its plans for publication of textbooks and execute them in collaboration with the state governments and bodies like the NCERT, the draft policy says.

The proposed policy also seeks to create a pool of professionally qualified personnel in publishing sector. To achieve this, The certificate courses, diploma programmes and postgraduate management degrees in book designing, publishing, e-publishing and marketing will be introduced at higher educational institutions.

DECCAN HERALD, SEP 7, 2015

Centre plans nine urban planning schools in different parts of country

Ajith Athrady

As the Centre started rolling out smart city project, housing for all and AMRUT urban infrastructure development scheme, the Ministry of Urban Development is working with the Ministry of Human Resources Development to start nine new urban planning schools at different parts of the country.

As per the proposal with the government, these institutions will be centre of excellence as IITs and IIMs have become in their respective fields and will have curriculum only related to urban planning, urban transport and other related issues.

The proposed institutions are likely to come up at Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Assam. There is a serious shortage of qualified urban planning professionals due to lack of institutions teaching such subjects. The government has, therefore, decided to open new urban planning schools in different parts of the country, a senior official in the Ministry of Urban Development told Deccan Herald.

At present, 25 various institutions in the country teach urban planning, including School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, Bhopal and Vijaywada.

To meet the demand for qualified planners, these institutions will give both bachelor's degree as well as master's degree in planning. The main thrust in the study and research is on physical planning, regional planning, urban planning, housing planning, transport planning and environment planning, said an official.

The HRD ministry will be the administrative ministry of the proposed institutions while the ministry of Urban Development will provide inputs for setting up curriculum as per the demand from the market.

Currently, India has about 300 urban planners. These experts mostly concentrated to metropolitan cities while there was huge shortage of such professional mainly tier-one and tier-two cities.

Though the NDA government has launched major programmes to improve urban infrastructure— Smart City and AMRUT and Housing for All by 2022, the government found there was dearth of experts in planning, said the official.

The government is expected to open at least two to three institutions in two to three years, said the official.

STATESMAN, SEP 4, 2015

Teachers shape our lives: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said teachers play a big role in students' life and shape "our lives".

Addressing students and children in the capital ahead of the Teachers' Day on September 5, Modi said teachers have a great responsibility towards shaping the future of children.

"We pay tributes to (late president) Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and mark his birthday as Teachers' Day," Modi said on Friday, a day ahead of Teachers' Day.

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP 3, 2015

Govt primary schools to get 'smart', says Mayor

More govt schools likely to come under the jurisdiction of the civic body

Chandigarh Mayor Poonam Sharma Wednesday said the seven government primary schools under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation (MC) would soon be converted into smart schools on par with the other government schools in Chandigarh.

The mayor visited two of the schools — Government Primary School (GPS), Sector 12 (PGI), and GPS, Buterla village— for inspection Wednesday. Sharma was accompanied by Joginder Singh, Block Education Officer, and concerned officers of MC.

Sharma added that she would request the UT Administration to transfer more schools under the civic body.

On her first visit to the schools after becoming the mayor, Sharma was apprised by the school in-charges of the poor condition of the buildings and lack of other infrastructure facilities provided on the schools' premises.

She also checked the midday meal provided in the schools and instructed the concerned staff to ensure hygienic food for the students.

She said that a meeting would be called in two-three days to chalk out a plan for the upgrade of the schools. Addition of hygienic food supplements to the students of the primary schools was also on the cards, said the Mayor.

It was in 2010 when the UT Administration had handed over the seven primary schools to the civic body. However, these schools continue to flout the norms of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. They have been running without benches, boundary walls, playgrounds and security guards, and have poor-textured blackboards and inadequate teachers.

Apart from GPS Buterla and GPS, Sector 12, the other schools are one each in Sector 26, Mauli Complex and Railway Colony, and two in Manimajra.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 1, 2015
JNU to go paperless to increase efficiency

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), in an effort to increase efficiency and accountability in the working of its administration, has decided to go paperless. This effectively will

mean that all inter-departmental communications will be conducted through the e-office system.

The university recently computerized all its operations - including inter-departmental communication, admissions and faculty registration - to make the administrative work paperless. “We are moving towards taking work online. We have established an e-governance cell to streamline our operations. This will increase efficiency and accountability. Anyone handling a file will now know what exactly happened with the file and which official is handling it,” JNU vice chancellor Sudhir Kumar Sopory said.

Any file which lands up at Sopory’s desk for his approval too is now greeted with a stamp which says “kindly send through e-office system”. Sopory said in a few months, the university will go hundred percent paperless. “There has been some resistance from some departments. So we have started using these stamps to put pressure on them,” Sopory said.

As part of the project, the university’s computer centre has also developed ‘JNU Intranet portal’ and ‘JNU private cloud IT infrastructure’. “The objective is to make workflow at JNU efficient with computerized operations and make accurate data and information available. This has helped in reducing the time taken for movement of papers and files in regular official work,” Sopory said. Sopory said the university has roped in Accel Frontline Ltd. of Chennai for software development while Wipro is serving as the technical consultant.

ENVIRONMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, SEP 2, 2015

Commercial units should be fined more for littering: NGT

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), citing the polluter pays principle, on Tuesday observed that the South Delhi Municipal Corporation should challan all big commercial establishments like hospitals and malls Rs 50,000 per day if any municipal waste was found littered near their premises.

A bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar, which took suo motu cognisance of the stinking garbage accumulated outside Max hospital in Saket, directed the South civic body to issue a challan of Rs 50,000 per day for each hospital, mall, cineplexes in the area for causing pollution and degrading the environment.

It also directed the legal officer of the corporation that in case these commercial establishments refused to pay the penalty after challans are issued, it may file a proper application in this regard.

SDMC's legal officer Laveena Passi told the tribunal that according to directions of the green bench, the garbage outside Max hospital has been removed and they have also been instructed not to do so in future. However, the hospital and other commercial establishments said that they were not responsible for the waste and heap of garbage lying on the road.

The bench then observed, "If they don't throw garbage, does it come from the sky? They cannot just keep on earning money. They should spend it as well. Why don't you impose a fine of Rs 50,000 on each of them? As part of their corporate social responsibility, they are supposed to clean the garbage. You prepare an application, we will pass appropriate directions."

During the hearing, advocate Balendu Shekhar, appearing for the South corporation, told the bench that there was Max hospital, Pushpawati Singhanian Research Institute, Saket City Hospital, malls including Select Citywalk, MGF Metropolitan etc, shops, cineplexes like PVR, which were all equally responsible for the generation of waste.

The tribunal also directed the Delhi government to submit within two weeks an action plan on reduction of noise pollution caused due to heavy traffic near Panchsheel Park area in South Delhi.

The directions came while hearing a petition of Omesh Saigal, a resident of Panchsheel Park, who alleged that noise pollution, generated due to heavy flow of traffic on the Outer Ring road, was affecting the health of people living in the area.

TELEGRAPH, SEP 3, 2015

Immediate challenge: Climate change and population growth

Ashok Sekhar Ganguly

India faces the twin challenges of climate change and population growth. That the Indian monsoon pattern has been rapidly changing owing to climate change even more than El Nino during these past 20 years is now well acknowledged universally, except among our meteorological forecasters and experts. Weather forecasting in the last century was a butt of popular jokes but attitudes have, of late, undergone a dramatic change and the weather forecasts in advanced countries now tend to be accurate almost on an hourly basis. Long-term forecasts have, for a while, repeatedly warned of dramatic and unpredictable weather patterns across the world, causing unprecedented droughts and floods.

That the Indian monsoon pattern has been significantly changing and becoming increasingly unpredictable has been obvious at least for the past 10 years, if not more. During the monsoon season, long periods of drought, followed by cloudbursts and deluge, seem more frequent and cause widespread damages. The recent floods and loss of life all across eastern India as well as Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are examples of erratic weather patterns, while the rest of the country remains in the grip of a drought-like condition. This is the pattern of this year's monsoon. Farmers in different parts of the country are trying to adapt to the vagaries of weather as best as they can, but India's sustainable agriculture faces serious unknown and uncertain challenges.

Side by side, India faces another and equally severe challenge. India's population growth and hyper migration of rural people into the cities have triggered a number of events, for example, a real estate bubble, which is supposed to cater to the explosive housing demand for those who can buy. To a very significant extent, such housing construction has also generated employment for the rural unskilled young migrating into urban India.

In and around large, medium and smaller cities, natural water bodies, reservoirs, mangroves, forest cover and natural estuaries are being rapidly destroyed by the widespread concreting of roads, the growth of multi-storey homes as well as slums and hutments. This is an unavoidable but dangerous trend, spreading across the country. One major reason for the severe floods and devastation in parts of India due to cloudbursts is that it was further exacerbated by the twin excesses of building activities and unrelenting movement of people in search of livelihood.

India, along with its South Asian neighbours, faces what can be best described as the real and present twin dangers of climate change and population growth, with several and inevitable disastrous consequences.

The plans to dredge and clean up major waterways and rivers such as the Ganga and Yamuna, for example, have remained on paper for several years without any visible progress. The ongoing discussion on the Teesta River issue with Bangladesh provides an immediate opportunity to both India and West Bengal to, in the first instance, put in place a bold and imaginative plan, not only to increase the availability of water for both Bangladesh and India but, at the same time, also to revive canals and plan new programmes, to prevent frequent and seasonal flooding as well as water shortage in both countries. Thus the West Bengal government and the government of India should jointly put in place a master plan on a war footing for conservation of water, and redirecting excess seasonal precipitation to water-starved areas in neighbouring states. Undertaking such a master plan can lead to a rewarding resolution of the long pending Teesta river treaty with Bangladesh while benefiting West Bengal.

The annual flooding of the Brahmaputra is another huge challenge as well as a great opportunity. The more than 50-year-old plans for connecting waterways, linking a number of Indian rivers to conserve water during the monsoon season and direct the bulk of the excess water to drought-prone neighbourhood states, remain on paper. This is primarily due not only to interstate disputes, but the wider lack of appreciation of the long-term dangers of inactivity at the national level. Sharing of water cannot continue to remain a subject of interstate disputes or endless Centre-state arguments. The spread of desertification across large tracts of the country is a reality, but its stark danger is not yet comprehended in the public domain.

Satellite surveys have starkly revealed the precipitous loss and shrinkage of ground water aquifers, particularly in north and central India. There are no evident or serious official plans or programmes to rejuvenate groundwater replenishment or well-planned watershed revival schemes, particularly in the drought prone regions of the country.

In a few years time, India will have the distinction to be the most populated nation in the world. Yet, there are no serious debates or discussions regarding the rapidly deteriorating condition of daily life and livelihood of the people of India. The Green Revolution was the product of an existential threat to the survival of India. Global warming and population growth now pose even a much greater threat, in the coming decades, to the very survival of large sections of India's younger generation.

The prominent issues of national discourse do not even remotely touch upon these real threats to India's future and its very existence. The time for our political, social and opinion leaders to wake up to the urgency of the twin threats that the nation faces is long overdue. India must begin by putting in place a national road map by the Centre and each of the states, along with assembled experts from India and abroad. Besides planning to

confront the rising dangers of terrorism, India needs an equally urgent national plan to manage the needs of water and food for its growing population, and especially the poor.

India's topmost priority is to seriously heed the overwhelming warnings of the dire consequences of climate change and population growth. History is replete with evidence of the demise of civilizations facing not dissimilar threats and not being able to successfully cope with the consequences.

Maybe not much can be done significantly, at this stage, to slow India's population growth but there is no alternative to urgently acknowledging and dealing with the devastating consequences of climate change. Water availability management is India's topmost priority. Successfully managing the Teesta water agreement, underpinned by a master plan for reviving and revitalizing the rivers and reservoirs in West Bengal is a godsent opportunity to signal the nation's determination and commitment to take charge of the destiny of our people. The alternative is unimaginable.

JUDICIARY

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP 3, 2015

Haryana AG gets cabinet minister status

The Haryana government has also hiked the salaries of law officers working in its AG office.

Written by [Sanjeev Verma](#)

THE Haryana government on Wednesday bestowed the rank and status of a cabinet minister on its Advocate General (AG) Baldev Raj Mahajan. [The Indian Express](#) had on August 13 reported that Mahajan would be the first AG in Haryana's history to enjoy the privilege. Mahajan's counterpart in Punjab, Ashok Aggarwal, already enjoys status equivalent to that of a cabinet minister.

The Haryana government has also hiked the salaries of law officers working in its AG office. As per the revised remuneration, additional advocates general would now earn Rs 1.40 lakh per month, while deputy advocates general would earn Rs 1.27 lakh and assistant advocates general would get Rs 86,500. There are 152 law officers working in the Haryana Advocate General office. The remuneration hike has been made with effect from November 2014 when the law officers were appointed after

the [BJP](#) government came to power. The hike, however, has not been effected for five additional advocates general, appointed during the [Congress](#) tenure, and they would continue to draw remuneration of Rs 85,000 per month.

As for Mahajan, the Haryana government has set his retainership fee at Rs 2.50 lakh per month. Apart from this, he has been allowed to charge various boards, corporations and autonomous bodies in connection with their cases in the high court and the Supreme Court at rates fixed by the state government from time to time. Mahajan has also been

allowed the fee payable to panel Grade A counsel when appearing for any of the state government departments before the Supreme Court.

He is also entitled to a government residential accommodation or house rent allowance of Rs 50,000 per month. Mahajan has also been authorised sumptuary and compensatory allowance of Rs 5,000 per month and all other facilities as admissible to a cabinet minister like a government vehicle with driver, TA/DA, telephone, LTC and medical facilities.

Mahajan was appointed as the Haryana AG on November 9 after the BJP came to power in Haryana. He had succeeded Hawa Singh Hooda, who has held the AG office for all 10 years of Congress rule.

A native of Amritsar, Mahajan has a long relationship with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). He moved to Chandigarh in 1971 and began as a clerk with senior advocate D V Sehgal before completing his LLB from Rajasthan. He joined Sehgal's team as an advocate in 1982 and is known as expert in civil law. He was designated senior advocate in 2013 by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Mahajan also remained as national president of the Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad and resigned from the post after taking over as the AG. Haryana Vidhan Sabha Speaker has also appointed him a member of Committee on Subordinate Legislation of Vidhan Sabha for 2015-2016.

LABOUR

STATESMAN, SEP 2, 2015

The bandh court

Mamata Banerjee's threat that it "takes one minute" to deal with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has lost its sting even before the Left-sponsored 24-hour industrial strike/bandh has begun. West Bengal's wishy-washy approach to the disruption has somewhat neutralised last Friday's setback that the CPI-M had suffered over its attempted resurgence. Far from a counter-mobilisation to confront the Left's show of force, the Trinamul leadership appears to have realised that "since the demands are similar, there is no point in resisting the call". It would be reasonable to assume, therefore, that today's strike marks an all-party convergence against the BJP's Centre. However, double-think runs wild as the administration signals its intent to "foil the bandh"... in parallel with the ruling party's assurance that "it will not directly oppose it". "We have decided not to go in for confrontation," was Subrata Mukherjee's assurance as chairman of the Indian National Trinamul Trade Union Congress. The party is seemingly circumspect in an effort to minimise the possible violation of the law; in a rather unusual directive, the police have been asked to "avoid a scuffle with the bandh supporters". Given the stranglehold of the unions over the transport operators, it is improbable that even a fraction of the administration's assurance of normal services will be fulfilled.

Strikingly, the Trinamul Congress has utilised the opportunity to underline the demands raised by the Left and Miss Banerjee's response thereof. It has been emphasised that the Chief Minister supports the CPI-M's demand to check food inflation through universalisation of PDS and a crackdown on speculative trading in the commodities market. Second, the ruling party is on the same page as the Left in the matter of employment generation and social security. Trinamul is marginally at variance with the CPI-M on minimum wage; the latter has been clamouring for Rs 15,000 a month - Rs 5000 higher than what the ruling party has recommended.

Above all, Trinamul endorses the CPI-M's opposition to FDI in three core segments - Railways, insurance, and defence. Clearly, both the Trinamul and the CPI-M have articulated an anti-Centre pitch on a welter of issues pertaining to public policy. Where the Trinamul and the BJP government are on the same page is on dealing with government employees who can't make it to office. While an employee in Bengal runs the risk of losing a day's pay, the Union finance ministry has forwarned absentee staff in central offices. While parties play out their politics in the bandh court, it is the daily

wage-earner who will suffer in isolation on account of the overwhelming political indifference.

TIMES OF INDIA, SEP 1, 2015

Rs 1000 crore: Lost in a day's bandh

KOLKATA: A day's bandh translates into a loss of more than Rs 1,000 crore for the state, experts have calculated. Over the last three years, the economic loss from a 24-hour bandh has increased by around Rs 350 crore.

The loss can be divided into two broad categories: economic and non-economic. While the economic loss includes loss of gross domestic product (GDP), production loss and loss of employment, non-economic loss cannot be measured in quantity. Experts feel the loss of the image and a negative sentiment carried forward during bandhs hampers a state's growth, which might not be measured in quantities, but the impact creates havoc.

According to economist Abhirup Sarkar, around 60 man days were lost nationally in 2008 and 2011 from bandh and lock-outs in West Bengal . "It has come down significantly at present. But such bandhs don't improve the image of the state, and are a major reason for discouraging industrialization in Bengal," he said.

While there is no method to quantify losses, a study conducted by Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has tried to put a figure to economic loss suffered by the state. In a study conducted in 2012, the chamber devised a method of putting together the state domestic product and divide it by the number of working days. During the study, ICC calculated working days for each sector — such as mining, agriculture and manufacturing — keeping in mind holidays and weekly off days. According to the report, the total loss from a 12-hour 'bandh' in Bengal was approximately Rs 804.55 crore, keeping the 2008-'09 NSDP (Net State Domestic Product) figures into account.

The amount of losses mounted over the years, and keeping the 2012-'13 NSDP in mind, the amount of loss arising from a 12-hour bandh crossed Rs 1,000 crore. According to data available from the state government, the worst hit sector was real estate and construction. According to 2008-'09 NSDP figures, the real estate sector suffered a loss of Rs 165 crore due to a 12-hour bandh, while the construction sector suffered a loss of Rs 131 crore.

Rajiv Singh, director general of ICC, feels that it not only impacts business environment, but also affects wage-earners to a large extent. "Two-thirds of the workforce is still

unorganized and these bandhs will only hamper their interest. Had they been in everyone's interest, it would have been successful in all states and not in select ones," he said.

Apart from that, losses to wage is another important component of economic loss due to a bandh. Wage loss applies to industrial wage labourers who work on a daily wage basis. These workers don't get paid when a bandh is called. Keeping the National Floor Level of Minimum Wage in the calculation, Rs 160 is paid to a worker per day on an average at present. With an estimated 10.11 lakh workforce at the registered factories in the state, the loss arising from wage loss is more than Rs 16 crore.

ASIAN AGE, SEP 2, 2015

15 crore workers go on strike across India over anti-labour laws

The strike will affect the functioning of essential services like banking, transport and supply of power.

The bandh will affect functioning of essential services like banking, transport and power supply

New Delhi: Crores of workers across India held a 24-hour strike Wednesday in protest to government's economic policies, which they say will put jobs at risk and hurt ordinary people.

Ten major unions went ahead with the day-long strike over the government's pro-business initiatives after talks with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley broke down.

Unions are demanding the government dump plans to sell off stakes in state-run companies to boost the public purse and to shut down unproductive factories.

Some 15 crore workers, including those in the banking, manufacturing, construction and coal mining sectors, were expected to walk off the job Wednesday.

The strike also affected transport. Long lines of commuters and school children could be seen at bus stops early Wednesday, while passengers were stranded at airports as taxis and rickshaws stayed off the streets.

Financial services were expected to be hit by the strike, with many banks shutting their doors for the day.

Hawkers, domestic workers and daily wage labourers were also expected to join the strike to demand an increase in the minimum wage.

Television footage showed the strike's impact in the eastern state of West Bengal, where unions enjoy significant clout, with the capital city of Kolkata mostly deserted with bank branches, shops and other businesses closed early Wednesday.

LIBRARIES

TIMES OF INDIA, SEP 3, 2015

Nehru museum revamp may put focus on 'nationalist' icons

[Himanshi Dhawan](#)

DELHI: Eminent leaders like Veer Savarkar, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Netaji Subhash Bose could be part of the pantheon of "nationalist leaders" whose papers, works or material associated with their lives could be showcased in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML). The NDA government has plans to "revamp" not just NMML to make its focus less Nehru-centric but all 39 cultural institutions under the culture ministry. These include Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Smriti, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts among others. The move has been slammed as "diabolical" by the Congress.

Speaking about the plans culture minister Mahesh Sharma said, "We feel that 39 institutions under the culture ministry have not realized their true potential whether it is Nehru Memorial Library or Sangeet Natak Akademi. As the central government it is our responsibility to acquire, preserve and maintain material related to nationalist leaders of modern India. The freedom struggle was not about one person. Our purpose is that all eminent people associated with the freedom struggle and those who worked towards building a modern India find a place in NMML."

When asked if leaders like Savarkar, Deen Dayal Upadhyay would be included as nationalist or eminent leaders Sharma said, "These and others like Netaji Bose have not found their due in history. We will ensure that it is done now."

Quoting from NMML's charter of objectives Sharma said it was the responsibility of the Centre to "acquire, maintain and preserve papers of nationalist leaders of modern India and other eminent Indians who distinguished themselves in any field, and establish and maintain a library of books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, microfilms, still photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings and materials bearing on the history of modern India, with special reference to the freedom movement" besides preserving material related to Jawaharlal Nehru, his family and associates.

Congress reacted sharply to the proposed plan for overhaul of important institutions like the Gandhi Smriti and Nehru Museum, calling it "diabolical" and accused the government of "subverting and diluting" their essential spirit and character.

"Devoid of any legacy that comprises of the building of our nation, the RSS and the BJP are playing a diabolical game of rewriting and misappropriating our rich and proud heritage of struggle for Independence," Randeep Surjewala, Congress spokesperson said in a strongly worded statement.

He noted that the NMML stands testimony to and symbolizes the country's struggle

against colonial rule as also India's evolution as a sovereign, democratic and secular nation in the years following Independence.

"Any attempt by the BJP, the RSS and Narendra Modi to diminish and downplay the legacy of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India and one of the greatest sons of the country, is not going to hold water with the people of our country," he said.

Sharma, however, trashed the Congress' charge and said "There is no plan to undermine Nehru or his thoughts. For the Nehru Memorial, we have plans for renovating the building, auditorium and library. We also want to increase the footfall at this place. More research scholars should be able to use the facility."

Asked whether the names of these institutions will be changed as part of the revamp, he said, "No such proposal is under consideration".

Stoutly defending his stand Sharma said that Congress statements appeared duplicitous. "It was the Congress that appointed a director for a period of 10 years a few hours before the new government was to be formed. That is an irregularity, not what we are doing," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS, SEP 3, 2015

Nehru Museum is all set to get a Rs 10-cr makeover

Several rooms where Jawaharlal Nehru stayed, will be refurbished.
The Nehru Museum is part of the Teen Murti complex.

The Delhi-based Nehru Museum (which is part of the Teen Murti complex consisting of the museum, the Nehru Memorial Library and the planetarium) is set for a revamp, for which Rs 10 crore have been set aside to modernise the place. Several rooms where Jawaharlal Nehru stayed, as the first Prime Minister, will be refurbished.

Discussions in the EC, which runs the affairs of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, have been around maintaining the drawing room and the study, but keeping a more thematic feel in the other rooms . Abha Narain Lambah, a well-known conservation architect, has been selected to refurbish the museum. She has been associated with a wide variety of projects in the past like the Viceregal Lodge in Shimla, the Chowmohulla in

Hyderabad, the Textile Mill Museum and other Victorian buildings in Mumbai and also the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra.

Lambah, who is from the School of Planning and Architecture, is a consultant to various international organisations and the recipient of eight UNESCO Asia-Pacific awards for conservation projects across India.

Given the often fraught relationship this government is said to have with Nehru and his family, there has been concern if the museum being modern implies making it less about Nehru. Director Mahesh Rangarajan refused to comment, but sources said “It will continue to be about Nehru, but museums have to be modernised and be made more welcoming for new visitors”.

Others say talks to develop and modernise the museum have been going on for the past three years.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

STATESMAN, SEP 4, 2015

Shock & Awe of 1975

Arunabha Bagchi

It is preposterous for an NRI to reminisce about the Emergency in India. At the end of June a number of editorials and articles in major Indian newspapers made me realise that 25 June 2015 witnessed the 40th anniversary of the declaration of internal Emergency. That fateful day in 1975 was just a week after my arrival in India for a family visit, and also to give some lectures in the operations management group, IIM Calcutta, headed then by my former professor Arun Choudhury.

I had to cut short my visit to IIT Delhi on my way to Calcutta as I soon learnt on my arrival there that the Opposition political parties had declared a national strike the following day. Once in Calcutta, I was very busy trying to gauge local political feelings among my acquaintances. Suddenly there was shock and awe with the imposition of Emergency by Indira Gandhi and the huge excitement all around vanished instantaneously.

Convergence of two separate events led to the political stalemate in Delhi in June of 1975. One was the guilty verdict on June 12 by Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court on two charges relating to Indira Gandhi's re-election in 1971. The Judge declared her election null and void, unseated her from her Lok Sabha seat and banned her from contesting any election for an additional six years. The judgment would be unthinkable in any western democracy. The Times, London, the most iconic newspaper of the country that boasts the Magna Carta, put it best when it remarked on the verdict as "firing the Prime Minister for a traffic ticket."

The other was a combination of a number of isolated protests that included the Bihar students' anti-corruption movement and the railway union strike crushed by the government. The Gandhian socialist leader of the freedom movement, Jayaprakash Narayan better known as JP, living in oblivion in Patna, supported the Bihar agitation. It was his last chance to play a significant role in Indian politics. Senior Congress leaders, who were outmanoeuvred by Mrs Gandhi, were waiting in the wings aided and abetted by Indian industrialists seething in anger with her bank nationalisation and other populist measures.

These diffused grievances got a focus with the unexpected verdict of the Allahabad High Court. The discredited leaders gathered in Delhi and started an agitation to unseat Indira Gandhi from power under JP's leadership. Even the right wing Jan Sangh, the avatar of Hindu Mahasabha at that juncture and a party of traders totally opposed to Gandhian socialism, joined the bandwagon. JP called for "total revolution", a muddled idea at best, by asking students, peasants and workers to transform Indian society by non-violent means. When JP openly told the police and the army to disobey orders, the die was cast.

In any western democracy, JP and other leaders of the agitation would be arrested forthwith. But Indira Gandhi had also this judgment of the Allahabad High Court hanging over her head. She got temporary respite from the Supreme Court, but lost her confidence in the final verdict there. She had sensed a conspiracy and got panicky. She knew that she defied the most powerful country in the world and dismembered that country's client state by creating Bangladesh. She saw her colleagues in Bangladesh and Chile brutally murdered. She also knew the joke of the US Foreign Service personnel in Delhi that the honesty of Indians is up to getting the "green card." Indira Gandhi took the drastic step of declaring the Emergency. Most Indians I met sympathised with her panicky reaction at that time.

Interestingly, I had close personal connection with two individuals on either side of the Emergency. The first one, and a lead player in the Emergency drama, was the late Justice A. N. Ray, then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The affection of Justice Ray for me during my college days was overwhelming. We talked for hours on diverse topics and he always listened to my opinion seriously. He was at the centre of a huge controversy even before the Emergency when Indira Gandhi promoted him to the post of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court superseding three other more senior judges. I was then in the United States where this is a routine matter. The President nominates all Federal judges, up to and including the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The US Senate holds public hearings with the nominee and finally confirms or rejects the nomination. Of course, we have the British type of parliamentary democracy, but then in Britain Parliament is supreme. Either way I did not understand what the fuss was all about.

My stay in Calcutta coincided with legal fireworks on the legality of Emergency with Justice Ray sticking to his belief that Parliament was supreme in India, just as it was in the United Kingdom. I saw all three branches of government, as well as the media, "when asked to bend ... crawled," as was later put so aptly by LK Advani. These social elites wasted no time to imitate this common behaviour of their subordinates towards them.

Once Indira Gandhi declared general election in 1977 and voluntarily handed over power to the new leader of Parliament, our elites were full of shame.

They all found in Justice AN Ray, who had by then retired, their ultimate scapegoat. The more they blackened him, the less guilty they felt about their own spineless character. Two of the Supreme Court judges who supported the government in the most infamous of all verdicts during the Emergency, that a person's right not to be unlawfully detained (habeas corpus) can be suspended, later apologised for their judgments. The media, despite the fact that those apologies came years after the event and sounded contrived, glorified them. At least, Justice Ray kept his honour, and did not opt for an easy escape. My other connection with the Emergency was even more personal, although it involved merely a commoner. As soon as the wave of arrests took place, we were alarmed about the fate of my mother's maternal uncle. He was one of a handful of Jan Sangh members in West Bengal, with the usual roots in the Hindu Mahasabha. He is the nicest man I ever knew, but still he had to be in prison for more than a year after Gandhiji's assassination.

Now we were afraid that even this insignificant politician from Malda, suffering from all Indian old age diseases like diabetes, cholesterol and high blood pressure, might not escape Sanjay Gandhi's wrath. Suddenly he sneaked stealthily into our Kalighat home, instructed my mother to pass on certain messages to his wife and aged mother, and disappeared into darkness. It was very thrilling like in the movies of our revolutionary freedom-fighters, and later of the Naxalites, and within a few days he was arrested. I realised then that the hatchet men around Indira Gandhi must have lost their mind.

Most newspapers dutifully wrote editorials and published articles on the 40th anniversary of the Emergency without any effort at self-examination. One exception was a remarkable article written by Maseeh Rahman, "Crawling Through The Emergency," that was published in Outlook magazine. This is his direct quote, "The erudite Sham Lal and the TOI group accepted press censorship without a whimper. KK Birla's Hindustan Times surrendered even more abjectly." He sketched the path from press censorship during Emergency to the "million tyrannies now." Ironically, the question of the supremacy of our Parliament as in the United Kingdom or the ceremonial role of our President like the British monarch remains still unresolved. The irrepressible retired Justice Markandey Katju recently declared that, "The Constitution has exhausted itself." No wonder that even LK Advani is worried about a second Emergency.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

TELEGRAPH, SEP 2, 2015

Tough act to follow: Possibilities of the AAP model if used in governing other cities

Commentarao - **S.L. Rao**

Most Indian cities are badly governed. Can the Aam Aadmi Party be a model for their better governance? Delhi is the national capital. Residents include the highest constitutional authorities, a huge bureaucracy, major public and private corporate headquarters, embassies, the international and local media, and many others. The city requires a secure and attractive environment. As the capital it must display the best of India. While the laws might make it a "state" it is unlike other states.

Delhi is almost entirely urban. Surrounded by states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and others, it is a corridor city with large migrant and floating populations. It is also a magnet for other Indians for employment, for lobbying with government departments, or just for visiting the historic and powerful city. Given the disparities in the population in age, cultural, educational and socio-economic factors, it has significant challenges. All Indian metropolitan cities face these challenges in greater or smaller measure.

The Delhi government has limited authority to govern and make laws. It cannot do so on public order, police and land. The principal agencies of change in Delhi are the Delhi Development Authority, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the New Delhi Municipal Council, the Cantonment Board and the police. Some of them have elected members who might belong to a party in opposition to the one ruling the state. Each agency functions autonomously, and reports to the Central government. Accountability to citizens is vague and so is supervision. Other cities have faced the same issues: multiple, sometimes overlapping, agencies, no coordination or direction, different state and municipal ruling parties.

About 49 per cent of the Delhi population, nearly 73.5 lakh people among 1.5 crore, live in slums and unauthorized colonies. Only 7.5 lakh Delhiites enjoy all civic amenities. Half are not connected to secure water and many live in homes not electrified, or not legally so. Government schools have absent teachers, poor quality teaching and poor sanitation. Health services are poor for them. Drainage is almost non-existent. Houses and roads often get flooded with stinking drain water. Corruption is rife at all levels and for all services. Other cities face these problems too. Their state governments give little support but collect much of the state revenues from them.

Arvind Kejriwal realized, after his India Against Corruption morphed into the AAP, that these slums and colonies would be his bastion, not the middle-class and traders who flocked to the IAC meetings. The poor wanted improvement in living, not speeches on good governance or budget deficits. Every major city has similar populations and challenges. Their underclass is unhappy and ready to be mobilized.

The AAP government has been about six months in power after the 49 days earlier. Has it delivered on promises? Can it be a model for other cities, also badly governed, corrupt, needing better roads and garbage clearance? Could local citizen movements in Bangalore, Mumbai or Chennai follow the Kejriwal route to leadership and reform?

The AAP government has announced free water supply to small users, halving power prices for small users. When retail onion prices rose to Rs 70 a kilogram, the government is subsidizing the prices to Rs 30. The cost to government of these measures is not known. The AAP claims (without evidence) that the low-level corruption that affects the majority has now almost stopped.

Kejriwal is a self-confessed anarchist. His governance style is confrontation, with the Centre, the media (that built him) and others. Serial confrontations with the Central government for more authority over the police, bureaucratic appointments, municipal bodies are an almost daily occurrence. Kejriwal asked the prime minister to help, but attacks him for not giving powers. He has moved from being a media-handling prodigy to a grump. Can new city leaders benefit their cities by continuous confrontations with their state governments for more resources and autonomy for their cities?

Bangalore, for example, has abysmal public services (roads, pavements, traffic management, garbage collection and disposal, violent crimes against women and children, a forever under-construction metro project. The Bangalore Agenda Task Force and the Bangalore Political Action Committee were movements led by professionals to improve Bangalore. They have not captured governance nor reformed the city. Nor have other metros with similar movements. Do they need a Kejriwal-type anarchist leadership?

The IAC was a mass agitation. It tapped into the public disgust at the large-scale thefts of public money and the deterioration of their city. Scams under the United Progressive Alliance reinforced the anger. Anna Hazare was a Kejriwal puppet leader whose simplicity of dress and speech made him seem Gandhian. A former soldier, in his seventies, he cleaned his village of Ralegaon Siddhi of corruption and alcohol consumption, improved its literacy and higher education, introduced better agricultural practices that brought prosperity to the villagers. Hazare was a scourge for corrupt Maharashtra politicians. There are such local leaders in other states too. A wannabe city leader looking to transform his city's governance will need to import such a person and build his visibility on such a reputation.

Leaders like Kejriwal can rise from among professional people in other cities. But they must be fiery activists, loud, brash, and even offensive in consistently demanding city reform. In Chennai, Mumbai, Bangalore and other metros, there are such concerned professionals. They use reason, not passion.

Kejriwal was an income-tax service officer who joined Aruna Roy to agitate for the Right to Information Act. He received the Magsaysay Award and learnt methods of public protest. He and Kiran Bedi, a professional police officer from Delhi, brought Hazare to Delhi to become the IAC's face. Kejriwal understood media manipulation. The anti-

corruption protest agitated the media. Kejriwal got extensive television coverage and benefited from the proximity to Hazare's halo. He was always with Hazare on TV, often speaking for him. The public identified him with Anna Hazare.

The IAC's agitation was for getting a strong legislation for a lokpal. Once Hazare faded from the scene after a long fast, Kejriwal became its sole public face. He soon converted it into a political party. The lokpal was soon forgotten. Anna Hazare was not seen nor heard. Bedi went with Anna Hazare. Aruna Roy was not connected. In time Kejriwal also broke with his powerful supporters - the Bhushans and Yogendra Yadav. Any urban professional wanting to lead his city must have this ruthlessness, strong cynicism about causes and know when to drop them. He must be brutal in discarding colleagues who are no longer relevant to a revised purpose.

Kejriwal was now a self-described anarchist politician. He wooed the large numbers of people in Delhi's unauthorized colonies and slums. They fell for his promises of regularizing their status, providing housing, free water, cheap electricity and less of the corruption that affected them daily. He promised to (illegally) redistribute to consumers the "regulatory assets" of Delhi's electricity distribution companies. The illegality of the expropriation never bothered this former income tax officer. Such grand promises by a 'saintly' leader would be believed. In Delhi it ultimately got the AAP overwhelming votes. New urban leaders need *chutzpa*.

The 2014 Delhi elections made the AAP the largest party. With support from the publicly despised Congress, Kejriwal formed a government. He resigned after 49 days for specious reasons. The AAP's overwhelming majority in the next elections was helped by the Bharatiya Janata Party discarding a tried leader (Harsh Vardhan) for a brittle and uncharismatic Bedi.

The anti-corruption movement had attracted many lakhs of well-meaning sincere people from the urban middle class. They deserted Kejriwal after his frequent confrontations and grand promises. The large vote block of the poor remained.

The Kejriwal model calls for hard work over years in building a self-image of sacrifice and honesty, with ruthlessness, cynicism, and the ability to use and discard people. It needs the confidence to abandon issues in favour of other more relevant ones. Urban professionals will donate, march, and support but they are too soft to copy Kejriwal.

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

TRANSPORT

TIMES OF INDIA, SEP 1, 2015

Salary raise for DTC staff on contract

NEW DELHI: Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has managed to increase revenues. On Monday, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal awarded best performers and depots in the DTC system, and revealed that revenue generation has gone up in the past few months.

While the average earning per day was Rs 2,21,05,980 in March this year, it's gone up to Rs 2,44,01,555 in August. "It's an increase of Rs 2,95,575," said Kejriwal while announcing an increase in the salaries of staff on contract.

The announcement, which comes months after contractual staff had protested at the Delhi Secretariat, will come as a welcome step for thousands of drivers and conductors working on contract. According to the DTC, there are over 4,000 drivers and 7,000 conductors working on contract.

As per the new salary structure, the government will pay around Rs 1 more per kilometer. Kejriwal added that on an average, the salary of contractual drivers will be enhanced in the range of Rs 2500 to Rs 4500 per month.

The transport minister Gopal Rai also awarded the best performing depots, which includes Ghazipur, Millennium Depot-IV, Hari Nagar, Ambedkar Nagar Depot, Rohini Depot-IV and a few more. These were selected according to their performance.

The key parameters for assessment of performance of the depots are average fleet utilization, operational ratio, kilometer efficiency, driver productivity per day in km, etc, said Rai.

He added, "Keeping in view the safety of commuters, specifically female commuters, 1500 marshals have been deployed in DTC buses. CCTV cameras have already been installed in 200 buses on which 3.75 crores have been incurred. The work for installing the CCTV Cameras in remaining low floor buses is under process."

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS LINE, SEP 4, 2015

Not-so-smart urbanisation

NARENDAR PANI

Urban fantasy But what about small town reality? K Murali Kumar

The Centre has not encouraged dispersed urban spaces, even as some States such as Karnataka have done so

The list of 98 cities chosen for the Smart City programme reveals, more than anything else, the approach of State governments to the challenge of urbanisation. The Centre had, based on the share of urban population and the number of urban centres in individual States, allotted a fixed number of cities that each State could claim support for. The chosen cities reflect the strategies for urbanisation. It is difficult to miss the roles individual States have visualised for their largest cities, usually the capital.

For some governments, the capital remains the main focus of strategies for urbanisation. In some cases this may not be a purely economic decision. Telangana's choice of Greater Hyderabad as one of the two cities allotted to it was predictable. With the dust over being granted Hyderabad in the division of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh not having entirely settled down, the new State could not be seen to be already abandoning the city.

A clearer affirmation of this strategy is in Maharashtra. The State's urbanisation has tended to be focused around Mumbai and the choice of urban centres suggests that this focus will continue. Greater Mumbai and Navi Mumbai are among the 10 chosen cities. Some of the others, such as Thane, can also be seen as the periphery of Mumbai-centric urbanisation.

Not much option

West Bengal did not have the luxury of the large number of cities allotted to Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu and had to make do with just four. It did not have the option of choosing Kolkata as well as its periphery. It has wisely chosen New Town Kolkata as one of its Smart Cities. Since the amount allocated to each city is fixed at Rs. 1000 crore, it would be more viable to spend the entire amount in a fixed part of the periphery rather than spread it over the entire city.

Arguably the boldest choice is that of Karnataka. Its largest urban centre, Bengaluru, does not find a place in the list of six cities allotted. Clearly the State government has decided that single city urbanisation is not sustainable. It puts too much pressure on Bengaluru's physical and social infrastructure. And when the city cannot absorb that pressure it only leads to capital being driven away. The State has instead chosen six smaller cities that have the potential for growth. With some of them having populations in the range of just 3 lakh, the impact of the Rs. 1000 crore will be more transformational.

The sensitivity of State governments to local patterns of urbanisation is a somewhat unexpected boon. If the hundreds of millions of people that India's urban centres are expected to absorb in the coming decades are not to throw the country into Industrial Revolution-like turmoil, it is necessary to follow the process of urbanisation closely.

Minding the process

It is unfortunately not entirely clear that the Centre shares the same sensitivity to the process of urbanisation. The Smart City programme is itself city centric, in that it deals with people after they have come into the city. There is no effort to address issues related to the process of migration *into* cities. Strategies that would provide labour for cities while they continue to live in neighbouring villages are not on the agenda. This is despite the fact that States like Tamil Nadu have demonstrated the value of efficient localised bus networks in such a process of urbanisation.

More significantly, the very method of allotting a certain number of Smart Cities to each State is indicative of a somewhat static approach. The allocations are based on existing patterns, with States that are more urbanised getting more funds. When seen in isolation this would appear to be the appropriate thing to do. The cities that are growing more rapidly will face the greatest pressures. But the steps needed to ease these pressures do not always lie within these urban centres.

The pressures of urbanisation felt in particular cities would be eased if the process was more dispersed. For one, the upward pressure on land prices in major cities would ease if the demand for land were to be spread over a larger number of cities. The dispersion of the pressures of urbanisation would require greater support to the development of alternative urban centres. But that calls for a shift in focus from smart cities to smart urbanisation.

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