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CORRUPTION

PIONEER 4.1.11 CORRUPTION

Nothing to cheer about 2011

Rajiv Dogra

There's no reason to believe that 2011 will be a better year than 2010. A corrupt society cannot aspire to greatness. And since there is unlikely to be a tectonic shift in the way we deal with issues, and because history continues to repeat itself, we will remain where we are. Standing at a crossroads as a new decade dawns, that's the view we get, shorn of hyperbole

Just because 2010 is over and we have entered a new decade, don't think we have crossed the cursed hump. 2011 may yet be worse.

Sadly, we have turned the chronological page without discarding the baggage of misdemeanours. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that we have become any wiser. We may be getting collectively more anguished with each passing day. But those who got away with the financial cream have merely become more cautious. It is doubtful if they have become any less profligate. That they are a bit more careful in covering their tracks is because of the national outrage.

Till the last quarter of the year 2010, skimming the exchequer was a game played with impunity. Like some richly endowed 'passing the parcel', money was changing hands on a massive scale. But the national script began to go horribly wrong from that point. There was only bad news thereafter; giving media one field day after another for it to churn out breaking story a day. Media has rarely had it so good, and for such a consistently long spell.

This serves to prove the age-old journalistic belief that the only good news is bad news. But what does the reader do? Is bad news good for him too? Or does he have a different yardstick? Well, as a reader and as a citizen you have two choices. You can close your eyes and ignore all that you have read. On the other hand if you feel concerned as an involved citizen, you can fret and cogitate.

Let's begin with the easier option of ignoring it all; of fatalistically believing that whatever happens in this world is god ordained, that men and women are merely playing their assigned parts in a script pre-determined by destiny. We could, in a similar vein, regard the media reports witheringly and consider it all in an optimistic light. Viewed thus, the year has been grand. We have had a high GDP growth even as many Western nations struggled to avoid economic meltdown.

One can counter this and say what about our preparations for CWG? Wasn't the sheer patchwork nature of them an unmitigated disaster? There is also the issue of the non-stop saga of corruption. Isn't that deeply worrying?

“Well, well,” begins the optimist in us soothingly, “what you call patchwork is actually another name for *jugaad*, and we Indians are famous for managing a *jugaad* at the very last minute. So what happened before CWG was no last minute rush, but a well practiced leap before the deadline. And in the end everyone went back happy. That is what counts; even if there were no tourists and even though the stalls remained without spectators. What counts is the end; the finish should be good, the wrinkles and the warts in-between are incidental. People will only remember the opening and the closing ceremony, nothing else.”

“That was a mere spectacle, a *tamaasha* which Indians are so adept at holding. What was so special in that?” You might counter again. But the attention has already shifted to the second question and the optimist in

us takes it head on; “Which society doesn’t have corruption? You think America is corruption free? Well, you are wrong. Think again, and you will remember the Wall Street collapse of 2008. Wasn’t that greed on a monumental scale? What our people did was puny in comparison, just a few odd billion dollars that slipped into some pockets here or there. How can you become a great power if you keep worrying about small change? So, just focus on the larger picture.”

For a moment euphoria takes hold, you forget about people siphoning off money and concentrate instead on the big picture; of India finally dictating terms to the world — a world where Indians wouldn’t be refused visa, and having been granted a visa we wouldn’t be singled out for frisking at an airport on arrival.

At that point reality begins to bite once more. “Why, the persistent in you enquires? Why must we tolerate corruption? No society has ever risen to great heights if its foundations are weakened by greed.”

We don’t have to look far for evidence; the recent history of our region provides sufficient proof. One huge difference between us and most of the rest in the region was that we were lucky to have leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel at the time of independence. The value system that they ingrained in the society became the foundation of nation building; honesty, hard work and respect for the other. These were the messages that our leaders kept intoning day in and day out. The first generation of independent India was a direct product thereof; self-reliant and self-sufficient. Self-reliance may have meant inventing the wheel again but it taught us the value of pride in work. We gained as a nation.

Sadly, some others in our neighbourhood chose short cuts personally and convenient cuts at a national level — cuts that led to military interventions in Governmental affairs routinely. Even when it was out of power, the Army in those countries would not empower the civilian

Government of the day fully. When the Army did not govern directly, it was reluctant to let the civilian Government govern. Such a state of affairs has a trickle-down effect; it gnaws at the national ability to follow the straight path. The result is obvious; economic development in such societies has suffered.

You might counter once more and ask, what about China? It is a dictatorship, yet it has done phenomenally well. That is indeed so now. But China was doing badly till it was under Mao's dictatorship. Had that form of Government lingered, it is moot if China could have succeeded the way it has in recent years. Moreover, China's success is not based on wide scale depravity. In fact, every now and then one hears of the corrupt being dealt with severely in China.

We in India have been devastated by the recent cases of corruption. Even the most generous destiny cannot provide an alibi for the sheer scale and audacity of these. You might still try to delude yourself by putting on the optimist's mask, and claim all is well. But that is at best an illusion, and in reality an exercise in self-deception. The fact is that people have turned bitter; they feel anguished by the brazenness with which public trust was betrayed. And they are looking for answers; most fundamentally as to where our national destiny will take us now.

We stand today at a crossroads with differently posted signboards. Whichever way you look, whatever period of history you examine, the result is bound to be uniformly same — that a corrupt society cannot achieve greatness. Whatever we might do otherwise, whatever innovations we might introduce, be it the much trumpeted UID or some such high falutin new convenience, the corrupt will carry on regardless. The unique number that we propose to give to each human being living in India contains no magic potion to check greed.

-- The writer is a former Ambassador.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HINDU 4.1.11 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy imperatives for growth

As the developed economies grapple with the worst economic downturn since the 1930s, two reports by the United Nations place the difficulties in perspective and offer valuable suggestions for both developed and developing nations to see them through the crisis in the near- to medium-term. Developed nations are yet to come to terms with the crisis in any meaningful way. Moreover, emerging economies and those from the developing world — particularly China and India — which acted as a bulwark against the spread of the economic contagion are likely to continue to play the role. But there are some caveats. The World Economic Situation and Prospect 2011, in its global outlook, points out that, although the weaknesses of the developed world were offset by the growth in the emerging economies, two main challenges remain. These include the dangers posed by premature fiscal consolidation in the developing world and the valid concerns over the ability of the emerging world to sustain its performance, particularly given its dependence on developed markets. For the developed economies, which could risk sliding into a possible double-dip if they continue with their present monetary and fiscal policies, the answer lies in coordinated fiscal stimuli in the short-run, rather than early fiscal consolidation.

For the developing world, the U.N.'s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific makes it evident that maintaining the region's recent growth trajectory calls for prudent policy-making, factoring in its dependence on markets in the developed world. Its year-end update of the Economic and Social Survey 2010 sounds a note of caution that there could be a slowdown in the growth of both developed and developing economies. The region's export-dependent economies

particularly are likely to be affected in 2011. That said, the observation that the Asia Pacific region would see “the most dynamic growth” in the world, despite the likely dip, gives national policymakers space to come up with well-structured policies that address a pressing social concern: poverty. Of direct relevance to the region's economic and social needs are suggestions to intensify regional economic activity and close infrastructure gaps. Stubborn poverty remains the biggest challenge for the Asia-Pacific, which is home to about 947 million people living under \$1.25 a day. It is necessary for developing countries to put in place inclusive development policies, supported by fiscal measures, to ensure that more people are pulled out of poverty. This, in turn, would step up aggregate demand and help the region come through the testing economic times.

EDUCATION

CLASS STRUGGLES

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

The future campus will see a new pecking order of disciplines. And the hunger of millions of students accessing the university for the first time. But will it have the space for the eccentric professor?

The campus of the future will be shaped by the competition between the promise of liberation on the one hand, and the pressure of social discipline on the other. Campuses had four features that are now beginning to unravel. The centre of gravity of a university was a library. It signalled three things: the quality of a university, the fact that universities were gatekeepers to the storage and access of knowledge, and that universities were the space for non-instrumental accumulation of every bit of knowledge that existed.

Technology has, in one sense, been liberating: the library is no longer the site for exclusive access to knowledge; in many cases it has become unnecessary. The gatekeeping power of universities has diminished, and the accumulation of knowledge has now to be made more instrumental to the demands of the economy. The second spatial layout of the universities was determined by something called the “disciplines”, where disciplines were defined by domain and technique. Universities are very institutionally conservative places, and the structure of accumulated disciplines is hard to displace. But the emerging structures of knowledge, for good or ill, will reconfigure the disciplines, and how

they are carved out. The promise of the new paradigm lies in the hope that the real innovation comes in the interstices and linkages between the so-called disciplines — students will inhabit zones that create links across structures of knowledge rather than defend boundaries. But the danger also lies, particularly in the social sciences, in having single techniques colonise discipline. Political science departments will resemble economics departments and so forth, premised on formal modelling, statistics and randomised experiments. There will be more technical wizards in the newer paradigm, but arguably fewer people who understand the things universities were meant to explore: human nature and self-knowledge in all its forms.

R-squared variances will replace the close reading of the Mahabharata and Montaigne as the only way to understand human psychology and it is not clear this will be for the better. The kids will be smarter, but perhaps none the wiser.

The third feature a campus had was forms of sociability, amongst faculty and students. The campus is arguably becoming less relevant to forms of faculty sociability, at least where sociability has a modicum of connection with intellectual life. Technology has made sociability truly global, both virtually and literally, and networks are likely to be stronger with colleagues thousands of miles away. For students, the campus will remain a rite of passage, that first moment of real independence; a site as likely to yield your soul mate as a career (or convince you that you can live with lesser liaisons); and a genuine place for exploration, exhilaration and frustration.

The fourth feature of a campus was the idea of a professoriate. This was a cultural ideal as much as a professional one. A group of people who had forsaken the allures of high income, committed to snatching a bit of

intellectual order in the world, whose sense of joy amongst books and labs was unparalleled, and who saw themselves as members of a single community: the Sanskritist was as valuable as the computer scientist. In some ways this idea has vanished. There is greater inequality of wealth and esteem between disciplines; professors are as likely to be consultants as they are committed to order, and a sense of a community is less structurally pronounced. Some changes have been for the good: for the professoriate often came with a sense of arbitrary power over students and this has been considerably disciplined. But as the professional has replaced the professoriate, the real eccentrics, those that made the campus interesting, have also disappeared. Instead of those insolvent, intellectually combative, somewhat unkempt characters walking around campus, you will see more clones of a corporatised culture.

The future campus will also be marked by the fact that millions of students in countries like India will be accessing the campus for the first time. They will bring a drive and energy, a hunger. Whether our campuses can respond to this is very much an open question. The dystopian thought is that the campus may end up being neither the space for self-cultivation as in its classical form; nor the space for professionalised knowledge. Instead, the campus could become the symbol of youth anomie, thousands of young men and women who have no idea where to go, nothing to excite them, except the allure of ideologies that tap into resentment. That the future campus will not escape serious political activity is beyond doubt; what form that political activity takes is open to question. The future campus is going to be poised between social connection and political anomie, freedom and discipline, hope and anxiety.

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& The Last Decade

Brain Drain II

In 2006, nearly three million students were enrolled in higher education institutions outside their own countries, a rise of more than 50 per cent since 2000. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, over a million students were enrolled at educational institutes outside their country of origin in 1980. Two decades on, the figure had almost doubled; less than a decade after that, it had tripled.

One of the most significant trends in education of the past decade has been the increase in the number of students studying outside their home country and India has been one of the biggest importers of students to the UK and US. According to the Institute of International Education, the number of Indian students in US universities increased from 55,000 in 2000-2001 to over a lakh in 2009-10. Countries like Canada and New Zealand, which 10 years ago welcomed only around 2,500 Indian students, are also part of the change: around 10,000 Indian students went to study in the two countries this year.

What's changed

It's a smaller world, and higher education in foreign countries is in the realm of the possible. Ruchika Castelino, the head of Indian operations of Study Overseas, a company that advises students, believes that “awareness” is a key contributing factor for the increase in the number of students going abroad. Peggy Blumenthal, chief operating officer and executive vice-president, Institute of International Education, says most international students are “attracted by the huge range of American institutions (over 4,000), the high reputation of US higher education, and

the value of a US degree back home.” She feels that the expansion of optional practical training (which allows graduates to work in their field of study on completing their studies) to 29 months for students in science and technology is another incentive. The increasing affluence of the Indian middle class has also made the exodus possible. Dr Geetha Nambissan, professor at Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, says, “The expansion of the Indian middle class and its participation in the global market of education has made a significant impact this decade.”

What Next?

For the first time this year, more students from south India went for MBAs than traditional degrees in technology and engineering. With the American economy in a slump, graduates are finding that India throws up more job opportunities. The end of the decade has seen more students returning to India after their graduation.

—**Nandini Nair**

TELEGRAPH 6.1.11 EDUCATION

Education as legal right

Some issues need to be sorted out

THE Right to Education Act requires private schools to admit 25 per cent students in the 6-14 age group belonging to marginalised sections of society from the 2011-12 academic session. The government will pay for the education of this section at the rate prevalent in government schools. No seats will be left vacant and admissions will be made through draw of lots. The aim is to provide education to every possible child by involving government and private schools without discrimination of any kind and ensure schools and teachers meet the laid-down guidelines. Since private schools often get subsidised land and are not required to pay taxes, they should not drag their feet in undertaking this noble cause.

The RTE Act is bound to erode private schools' profitability and force them to hire more teachers, the cost of which will be borne by the other students. Each school is required to furnish details of the expenditure incurred on the education of every child. This will make their accounts public — something private schools hate to do. But it will also ensure greater transparency and curb fleecing of parents on one excuse or the other. Parents and local bodies will have a greater role in the management of private schools.

After initial hesitation private schools in Chandigarh have agreed to implement the Act. Some issues remain to be sorted out. If an underprivileged student drops out midway, will the government still pay the subsidy? The Act empowers the local authorities to ensure compliance of the specified norms. This may encourage bureaucratic interference as well as corruption in the functioning of private schools and discourage innovation in teaching. Officials should not be allowed to destroy good private schools. Besides, will children from modest

backgrounds be able to cope with the examination-driven system without adequate financial and academic support from their families? In the absence of a level-playing field they may lag behind and face psycho-social pressures. A flexible, thoughtful approach is required for removing irritants and implementing an otherwise well-meaning Act.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

HINDU 5.1.11 INTERNATIONAL RELATION

India-Russia ties in the neoliberal era

M.K. Bhadrakumar

Dmitry Medvedev's visit can be considered "historic" — the true commencement, arguably, of the post-Cold War era of Russian-Indian "strategic partnership."

If last month's official visit by President Dmitry Medvedev to India came anywhere near being marred, it was from a most unexpected quarter — onions. Indians can't make curries without onions but now 80 per cent of them can't afford this vegetable. They were contemplating how to substitute onions with finely chopped leaks when Mr. Medvedev arrived.

Yet, the visit became a page-turner and the youthful President calmed the eye on our tired, jaded political landscape. The visit was "bound to be successful, in theory," as an experienced Russian scholar coyly predicted. Not only the annual summit was meticulously choreographed but there is also a growing "bipartisan" interest in India in the relationship. The right-wing lobbies weaned on old-fashioned "anti-communism" that mocked at Soviet-Indian friendship, the Left which nostalgically (and simplistically) views Russia as the inheritor of Soviet legacies and the government with a pronounced "pro-American" tilt — all agree that India should have a privileged bond with Russia. No mean thing in our highly fragmented polity. Only the common people and intellectuals — who used to constitute the vanguard of Soviet-Indian friendship — are missing from the spectacle. Ironically, 2010 was also the 55th anniversary of the historic visit by Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai

Bulganin to India but no one remembered. To be sure, the distinctive mark of summit 2010 in Delhi is that the “market forces” have penetrated the veins and arteries and even the capillaries of the two countries' relationship. Such things are probably part and parcel of our current neo-liberal era. But is that a good thing to happen? A reverse osmosis is happening in the Sino-Indian partnership. For China, public diplomacy in India has assumed great significance. Anyway, both Russia and India seem content with the way things turned out and are settling for a durable “strategic partnership” based on “convergence of interests,” uncluttered by ideals or ideology. There is, of course, no question of infidelity in such a partnership and no scope for adulterous acts — not even flirtatious intimacies. An extraordinary calmness has come to prevail, which is truly rare in relationships.

Mr. Medvedev's visit can be considered “historic” — the true commencement, arguably, of the post-Cold War era of Russian-Indian “strategic partnership.” The ties have been salvaged from the seemingly hopeless shipwreck of the 1990s and retrieved from the long night of India's “unipolar predicament” (leading to the signing of the U.S.-India nuclear deal in 2008) and, lately, fresh content has begun to be injected into it so that the partnership could acquire the *raison d'etre*. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced the success of this enterprise when he said Russia had become a “special and privileged” partner with which India would pursue a relationship independent of its ties with other countries. By “other countries,” he probably meant the U.S. and China. Shorn of diplomatese, New Delhi would nonchalantly accelerate its strategic ties with Washington which, as India understands, is bent on “containing” China, while Sino-Russian ties are deepening and expanding and the two countries increasingly coordinate their stance on regional and international issues, as the latest instance over North Korea amply testifies. New Delhi expects Moscow not to get flustered by the cut and thrust of U.S.-India ties, which by far

outstrip Russia's reset with the U.S. and are of a qualitatively different character.

India would give primacy to bilateral issues in the partnership with Russia. Wherever there is convergence on regional and international issues, that is fine. And if there is any divergence, that's only natural and the two countries learn to live with it. The joint statement issued after Mr. Medvedev's visit reflects this new thinking. It underscores that India and Russia can still have a “strong convergence of their views on regional and international issues of importance to the security of both countries.” But then, that's blasé. Russia's joint statement with China following the summit in Beijing in late September 2010 pledged the two countries to promote a “new security concept” on the basis of mutual trust, mutual benefits, equality and cooperation.

The Sino-Russian statement promised mutual support for each other's core interests. The Russian-Indian statement remains silent on the Indian stance on , say, Russian interests in the Caucasus or the Russian stance on India's differences with Pakistan. With regard to the Afghan problem, while there is similarity in the Indian and Russian assessments, the two sides offer nothing in terms of a joint initiative. India faces regional isolation while Russia has an active regional policy with regard to the Afghan problem that even provides for cooperation with Pakistan. India appears to have serious reservations about the U.S.' AfPak strategy and yet seems adamant on working principally with the U.S. The joint statement is silent on what sort of Afghanistan the two countries seek. Shouldn't it be a “neutral” Afghanistan free of long-term foreign military presence? The two countries must be seized of the looming prospect of a long-term NATO military presence in the region as a crucial vector of the alliance's determination to become a global security organisation that can intervene in “hot spots.”

In political terms, the balance sheet of the summit favoured India. The Indian sherpas negotiated hard and the Russians were generous — support for India's bid for permanent membership of the U.N. Security Council, inclusion in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and other technology control regimes, SCO and APEC. The Indian commentators may have over-interpreted the joint statement's portions on terrorism as constituting Russian criticism of Pakistan, but India can derive satisfaction that Russia joined it in calling upon Pakistan “to expeditiously bring all the perpetrators, authors and accomplices of the November 2008 Mumbai attacks to justice.” In return, New Delhi expressed solidarity with Moscow's “efforts to eliminate terrorism from Russian soil.”

However, the leitmotif of Mr. Medvedev's visit was the substantive engagement of the two countries at the bilateral level. Much hope is placed on the recovery of bilateral trade from the stagnation that persisted till 2-3 years ago. The target of \$20 billion by 2015 seems reachable, spearheaded by military-technical cooperation and nuclear commerce. India is taking a focussed approach to the relationship. Put simply, Russia is willing to offer India high technology that the West is not yet ready to give. As a Delhi newspaper commented thoughtfully, “Russian technology may not be as good as that of some countries of the West, but at least it is available.”

During his November visit, President Barack Obama promised to lift the remaining American restrictions on the flow of “dual-use” technology to India. No sooner did Mr. Medvedev leave than senior U.S. officials began calling their Indian counterparts to say they would like to follow up on Mr. Obama's assurances. The U.S. has great motivation to catch up with the Russian approach of going beyond a buyer-seller relationship and to enter into defence-industrial cooperation so as to optimally tap into India's whopping defence-modernisation budget of \$80 billion through 2022.

However, it is unlikely that the U.S. will be able to match Russia in such areas as the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft, access to GLONASS, space-launch vehicle engines or nuclear-propelled submarines. All the same, the business part of Russian-Indian partnership is already characterised by hard negotiations. The two sides failed to sign agreements on Russia constructing two more nuclear power plants in India. Russia has sought a clarification on India's nuclear liability law. There were no big energy deals, either. Russia is entering the Chinese market, while India teams up with the U.S.-sponsored TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline project despite its “anti-Russia” orientation.

The romance of friendship had a soothing effect on the rough edges of Soviet-Indian relationship, which is absent today. The danger of today's dealings accruing over the fullness of time as a transactional relationship exists. There is no point ignoring the camel in the Russian-Indian tent — China. The Russian foreign policy is balancing between China and India, whereas India seems to take its rivalry with China very seriously and boastfully and is yet to comprehend that its role as a counter-weight to China is gradually diminishing. Russia understands that China's domestic problems are gigantic and it will have to devote most of its efforts to cope with them. Also, Russia has direct stakes in the Asia-Pacific region — unification of Korea, for example, is in Russia's strategic interests. But China's rise colours India's Asia-Pacific sights. However, the fundamental dichotomy lies elsewhere. The heart of the matter is that India figures in Russia's geopolitical schemes as part and parcel of RIC (Russia-India-China), BRIC (Brazil-Russia-India-China) and SCO for the obvious reason that Moscow regards these emerging entities as the ultimate driving force for revitalising the world economy on a long-term basis. While this point seems to register well with Brazil and China, India is hesitant to take a strategic decision.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Bihar will be transformed

Vandita Mishra

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar on the politics that will change and inspire the country.

Bihar will be transformed by 2020. By that time, it will become possible to link Bihar's past glory to its future. The Nalanda University will have been established as the great symbol of this re-connect.

Bihar was a test case. If things are changing in Bihar, it shows the country the way forward. In fact, to understand the nation, you must first understand Bihar. Historically, Bihar has always been a part of India's mainstream, never away from it.

The challenge for Bihar will be to stabilise population growth. There are limits to the demographic dividend. Today, we have an action plan to impart skills and training to the young to respond to the demand in the market. But in a changing world, policies are increasingly technology-driven. We need to be alert lest our advantage turns into a disadvantage.

In Bihar, we are reaching out to the young separately. Because it is the new generation that has aspirations. The real problem was that the young had stopped dreaming or hoping for a better life in Bihar. It had become a state for labour export. Today, dreams have grown wings in Bihar. Look at the girls, who are riding bicycles, going to school. They are forcing their parents to think in new ways. We are aware that if we don't

take the aspirations that we have awakened to the stage of fulfillment, we could be swallowed by them.

BJP: Secular party?

Certainly, there can be no untouchability in politics. At the same time, the mainstream in India can only be secular. By and large, we are a people with a secular ethos. The hardliners have not had a lasting impact in our history.

I said I am with the BJP but I will follow the secular agenda. In this, the BJP also helped me and now they have reaped the maximum gains. The BJP should think about this. They were never as strong in Bihar as they are now. In undivided Bihar, they were strong in the Jharkhand region. If you look at the party's career, it has become strong whenever it has aligned with the secular stream. At the Centre, it jumped to 182 seats in 1999 only when Atalji was the leader who reached out to everyone.

The Bihar experiment has been noted at the national level. The BJP is with us and yet there is no discontent among Muslims vis-a-vis our government. In fact, Muslims voted not just for me, but also for the BJP because they knew that it was I who would form the government. This is not a small change.

Congress: National party?

Where is the national party today? There are only multi-state parties. The era of Congress dominance is over and the BJP never had an all-India expanse to begin with.

The Congress remained strong till it functioned as a federal party. But as it got centralised, it lost in region after region. Recently, after it crossed 200 seats in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls, the Congress again began nursing

delusions of achieving a majority on its own. We saw the return of the old Congress arrogance. But look at what has happened. There have been so many high-profile visits this year — the US president, the French president and the Chinese premier came to India. But they have all been eclipsed by Adarsh, CWG, 2G.

Today, the Congress is not even in a position to cope with the power that it has, or to retain it, much less fantasise about increasing it.

Consider the vocabulary of the Congress-led Centre. We give to the states, they say. They forget that it was when they started changing chief ministers wantonly that they were diminished as a party. This language is dangerous in a democracy, especially one as diverse as ours.

At the national level, the coalition era will continue. And the Congress's political graph is going down. Despite an honest prime minister, there is no governance, and the Congress will continue to shoot itself in the foot.

Caste: Not the only identity

In times to come, people will observe and practise their

caste in the confines of their homes. We can't erase caste. But in the public sphere, people will get more succour and they will draw more pride from a more spacious identity — the Bihari identity.

In this Bihar election, the significant thing was that the people of the state, whichever part of the country they were in, and whichever caste they belonged to, felt proud of the change in Bihar. There has been a grand transformation in the terms of identification — now there is kinship with the girl on the cycle, or with the woman engaged in decision-making, and with the pride every Bihari feels in the state.

Slowly people will find it meaningless to harp on caste in the old ways. In history, there have been times when caste has receded from direct view, and then come back into focus.

Now another line has been drawn, and it is becoming more salient. The pull of old identities may still be there but attention is shifting to something larger. The Mandal and mandir cards can be used no longer.

Once everyone's participation is ensured in development, what remains to be exploited? Mandir came as a counter to Mandal. Now something larger is growing. It is for social scientists to analyse. But there are larger issues now, and larger identities. In this election, it was proved that voters have raced far ahead of the old frameworks of analysis of their voting behaviour.

Muslim vote: Still in Blocs?

The people of the minority community are shedding the old mindset that if you are with the BJP, you are untouchable by association. Secondly, earlier the specific concerns of the Pasmanda Muslims or backward Muslims were not recognised. Now there is growing acknowledgement of their existence. Pasmanda Muslims point out that whenever they raise the demand for Scheduled Caste status, they don't find any support from upper caste Muslims.

Thirdly, it used to be said that Muslims either vote strategically or emotionally to defeat the BJP. That is no longer the case. It is a positive development that must be understood.

Muslims need employment and modern education too. They cannot be asked to forget everything else in the name of security.

Welfare: Cash will be King

I believe that direct cash transfers are the way forward. Give money to the people and give them the choice to buy what they want from the market. Otherwise, corruption is all-pervasive in tenders, in bids, and the quality of material.

You also involve the individual more in this way. In the free uniform scheme, for instance, the government only gave the final approval for the design and the colour code, but the individual buys the cloth, then goes to the tailor to get the uniform made. Trade in cloth has increased, tailors who were previously idle have got work again. Only corruption would have increased if government had placed bulk orders and distributed readymade uniforms.

I followed the same pattern for Kosi relief. I said I will not distribute readymade clothes. It was also a way to nudge them out of the trauma after the disaster.

For the cycle scheme, there was a temptation to provide cycles to the people instead of the money for them. In that way, the argument went, all cycles would be of one colour, and they would all carry the state government logo. But if I had invited tenders from manufacturers, you would not be talking of cycles today, but of the cycle scam.

When cycle factories come to Bihar, we will ensure that the people, not the government, will buy the cycles. I am patronising industry by giving it a large and assured market —12 lakh cycles were bought in one year and the number will only grow.

This is a scheme with 92 per cent success — remarkable for any scheme. Now the girl demands a cycle, even in the face of family opposition. My

policy will be to provide mostly cash transfers in state schemes in the future as well.

Graft: A Backlash Brewing

I held 300 meetings in the election campaign and at each meeting, there was a huge response when I would tell the people that if I returned to power, I would seize the property of the corrupt and open schools in them.

Two years ago, during my Vikas Yatra in January 2009, I invited people to come forward and criticise the government — we called this interactive session samvad or dialogue. At each meeting, 10-15 people would come forward and speak on corruption in the lower levels of government. And the rest would applaud. I brought in the Bihar Special Courts Act (to ensure speedy trial of corruption cases against government officials) after the Vikas Yatra.

I have seen the earlier political moments when the issue of corruption became large — the JP movement, and then the VP Singh era in the late '80s. I sense something similar now.

The political class cannot afford to be complacent and cynical about this. We have to be more transparent. Many people would like to see this as a passing phase. But that is wishful thinking. The young see corruption as their biggest enemy.

My future

I am serving the national interest by serving Bihar. I have already been in the central government and in Parliament. Now I want to serve my state.

Nothing comes your way if you only aspire for it — it comes through your work. I am getting national recognition through my work. What more could I ask for? From where I am placed, I feel the blessings of the whole nation. Everyone was overjoyed by the Bihar result. Has that happened in any other state election?

In conversation with Vandita Mishra

& The Last Decade

Incumbents can win

And win convincingly, if they govern reasonably well: that was the idea that defined politics in 2001-2010. And the message is clear if we compare election results of 2001-2010 with the previous decade, 1991-2000.

Parliamentary Elections

The 1991-2000 decade saw four Lok Sabha elections, in 1991, 1996, 1998 and 1999. In 1999, the BJP-led coalition came back to power. In the other three elections, the incumbents lost power. The 2001-2010 decade has seen two Lok Sabha elections, in 2004 and 2009. In 2004, the incumbent NDA lost. In 2009, the incumbent UPA won, and the Congress, convincingly improved its performance. However, Lok Sabha elections offer too small a comparison base for this thesis. It's in assembly elections, where the story plays out.

Assembly Elections

There were 55 assembly elections in the 1991-2000 period, and 56 in the 2001-2010 period. In 1991-2000, in 37 assembly elections (over 67 per cent), the incumbent did not return to power. If we exclude the first Delhi assembly elections and the polls in Jammu and Kashmir (held

after a long period of President's rule), anti-incumbency jumps to around 70 per cent (incumbents lost 37 of 53 state elections).

Contrast that with 2001-2010. Incumbents lost in only 26 elections in this period. The anti-incumbency rule was satisfied in less than 50 per cent of the state elections (46.5 per cent of the incumbents lost).

This is a big change, in fact, the biggest change in Indian politics, where even parliamentary poll verdicts are dependent largely on state-specific electoral moods.

The trend is borne out by a study conducted by Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Palshikar (published in 2009 in the EPW). They found that state-level incumbents lost 77 per cent of elections between 1989 and 1998, 62 per cent between 1999 and 2003, and just 46 per cent between 2004 and 2008.

The Faces

Nitish Kumar, the author of the future of politics essay in this issue, is the most recent and perhaps the most inspirational face of the new trend. Sheila Dikshit in Delhi, Shivraj Singh Chouhan in MP, Narendra Modi in Gujarat are the others. The late YSR Reddy, who won in Andhra Pradesh for the second time in 2009, would have been a poster boy as well.

—**Ravish Tiwari**

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The missing element of planning

Deepak Dasgupta

THE Twelfth Five-Year Plan projects India to attain a GDP growth level of 10 per cent with the major part of the growth coming from the secondary and tertiary sectors, namely manufacturing and services. As the bulk of these activities take place in urban areas, a rapid urbanisation is accepted as inevitable.

The existing urban population is already around 300 million or 30 per cent of the total and the pattern around the world suggests that this will reach around 60 per cent before stabilising. Thus, the urban population of India is expected to reach 500 million by 2021 and around 800 million by 2051 with the number of Class 1 cities (population: 1 lakh) increasing from 301 in 1991 to around 800 by 2021 and the number of million plus cities being in excess of 50 by 2021.

The rapid pace of urbanisation that is already upon us, will throw up great challenges in the planning and development of townships and the provision of urban services. An important area, requiring serious attention, is the manner in which we plan for people to move and travel within these urban conglomerations. Urbanisation leads to greater travel demand and as the population of a town increases, the demand for travel expands exponentially, both in terms of trip lengths and trip rates.

The level of congestion and chaos witnessed on our city roads would seem to indicate that our response so far has been failing to meet the urban transportation needs. While efforts are now on in a number of cities to provide different modes of mass transit systems, these appear very inadequate and too little too late. Thus, billions of man hours are

being lost with people stuck in traffic jams caused by the huge explosion in the number of motor vehicles jostling on the roads for the limited available space. The lack of suitable public transport systems has meant the increased use of personal vehicles thereby contributing to congestion.

There have been some efforts towards land use planning in urban areas within the town planning departments in the states and major cities. Unfortunately, however, transport planning has not received the extent of attention it should have while drawing up strategic and land use plans. There is a failure to link transport planning to land use planning and to prepare integrated master plans that internalise the features of sustainable transport systems. It is important to channel the future growth of a city around a pre-planned transport network rather than develop a transport system after uncontrolled sprawl has taken place.

In designing the transport plan for meeting the travel needs of the population of an urban conglomeration, different modes of transport have to be perceived in an integrated manner. Experience world wide has shown that based on peak hour trips in a corridor, the modal selection can be made between road-based bus systems, bus systems with dedicated bus ways, light rail or mono rail and heavy rail systems. Finally, some road systems like ring roads with free flowing entry and exits can be provided for dispersal of motor vehicular traffic from one area to another. The entire transport system of a city needs to be on an integrated basis so as to facilitate easy transfer from one mode to another.

Some steps are being taken in a few cities to provide mass transit systems in the form of rail based metros and dedicated bus lanes, but the demand continues to far exceed the provisions being made. This reflects the lack of adequate transport planning skills within the urban planning and development bodies as also the absence of an institutional mechanism for an integrated look at the different transport mode within

cities. While the responsibility for the management of urban areas and consequently urban transport is with the state governments, it is imperative, having regard to the economic importance of urban transport, that the Central Government play a pivotal role in ensuring the creation of institutional mechanisms for the integrated approach to urban transport planning. Central support would also be required for devising and financing of schemes of urban transport.

The National Urban Transport Policy fully recognises the issues involved, but the time has come for some urgent action. Transport plans for major cities should now be prepared on the lines of guidelines and directions incorporated in the policy and put out in the public domain for widespread discussion. The funds available under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission launched by the Centre have to be used as catalyst for this action.

The writer, a former IAS officer, was Chairman, National Highways Authority of India