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CORRUPTION

TIMES OF INDIA 13.9.11 CORRUPTION

Lokpal: The goal is the same

Salman Khurshid

Despite the dramatic visuals of the ostensibly differing positions of [Anna Hazare](#) and the [UPA government](#) - and despite the competing decibels of political posturing - there is far less distance between the two sides than some people believe or want others to believe. Few sensitive people will deny that there are genuine concerns about levels of corruption that have undermined our pursuit of the greater good of the country. Whilst big and dramatic cases of corruption provide a psychological backdrop for protest, the larger concern is the common citizen`s daily struggle to secure basic amenities without petty corruption.

Be that as it may, both dimensions have to be addressed - and addressed with a sense of urgency. That is why i suggest that the goals of Anna, other sections of civil society like Arundhati Ghosh, Harsh Mander, Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey, Amod Kanth, et al and the UPA are the same, even if the path may appear to be somewhat different at times. Why then the angst of a seeming confrontation?

It will serve little purpose to conduct a post-mortem of who might have misjudged the matter and whether we could have prevented certain developments. We did after all succeed in conducting a meaningful dialogue in the end, in fact making it a fresh beginning.

If we look to the silver linings, there is much to rejoice about. We experimented with yet another form of institutionalised dialogue with

civil society and with some success; we discovered the reach of new media and the vigour of pervasive electronic media; we made new friends and rediscovered old ones; Parliament expressed its will and wisdom with political parties overcoming the temptation to score debating points across the floor.

We have to now address, first through the standing committee, the challenge of drafting a [Lokpal](#) Bill that has the backing of Parliament and the people of India alike. Hopefully, without causing any delay, Parliament will be able to raise the level of the Lokpal to that of a constitutional body as suggested by Rahul Gandhi in a soul-searching, visionary intervention in the House.

As we undertake the historic task, a few points need to be flagged: It has to be admitted that the Lokpal idea was diligently pushed by the National Advisory Council under Sonia Gandhi long before Anna's movement brought it onto the streets. As democrats, we are proud of having given the RTI (Right To Information) Act to the country - not always very comfortable to government ministers and civil servants. The Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill has already been examined by the standing committee. We are also working on the Public Procurement Bill, amendments to the Money Laundering Act, Whistleblowers Protection Bill, Public Services Delivery and Public Grievances Redressal Bill, UID Authority Bill, Electronic Services Delivery Bill, Foreign Companies Prevention of Bribery Bill, Electoral Reforms Amendment Bill to decriminalise politics: all as part of a wholesome spectrum of measures to curb and eliminate graft and corruption. It is in light of these that we should look at the prospects and proposals for Lokpal.

Between the Anna model and the department of personnel and training (DoPT) model, there is complete agreement on the Lokpal being a high-powered, conspicuously autonomous anti-corruption body with jurisdiction over Prevention of Corruption Act complaints against public

servants. We have agreed that all ministers, MPs and Group A officers would be included. There is some scope and a range of views on including a serving prime minister.

However, the difference remains that the Jan Lokpal is conceived as a superintending body like the Central Board of Direct Taxes with delegated powers to officials below it at different levels, whilst the DoPT model conceives the Lokpal as a quasi-judicial body that by its very nature cannot delegate its powers. But since the Anna view requires all civil servants to be covered and it would be physically impossible for the 11 Lokpal members to deal with such a vast number, it would be imperative to have a virtual separate bureaucracy with attendant problems of their potential corruption despite the best measures suggested to keep a check. In addition, the Jan Lokpal model would give these officials all powers, including the power to prosecute and impose disciplinary sanctions. It is arguable whether such far-reaching consequences should be left in the hands of mere junior officials.

No one is suggesting that the lower bureaucracy be left unbridled. Under the DoPT model, a revamped [Central Vigilance Commission](#) would have jurisdiction to check corruption cases amongst Groups B, C and D with some link with the Lokpal in appropriate cases. The Citizens` Charter will be under a separate structure similar to the Central Information Commission stream. It is this segment that i understand attracts most public support and is a priority with Anna. Thus, the departments will have chief vigilance officers and public grievances officers with strict appointment procedures. Parliament spoke of appropriate mechanisms, so we have to wait to know how it plays out. One can say at this stage that there will be transparent accountability at every level. Possibly, CBI expertise could be used, again with some link with the Lokpal akin to the functional arrangement of the Chief Election Commissioner with regard to officials used for election duty.

The other point of marginal difference is on whether there can be a

single legislation for the Centre and the states. That will depend on a final view on legislative competence between the constitutional lists. If a single legislation is not permissible, a model legislation will be offered to the states. There are important issues of federalism that we must all reflect upon objectively.

One critical factor has to be kept in mind: the Lokpal is to investigate corruption and ensure that sanctions are imposed by court. But the Lokpal can prevent corruption only by setting an example, not by snooping around and becoming a Big Brother. That pure policing (as opposed to investigative) job will have to be done by the government. It is for that reason that surveillance and phone tapping remains with government agencies. Even in our commitment to root out corruption, we cannot give a go-by to fundamental principles of civil liberty. India must remain a free society, not become a police state.

There are several side issues that have either been agreed to in principle or else need not lead to a stalemate. The selection committee can easily be accepted. The merger of CBI is neither necessary nor advisable. The Lokpal will have its own investigative wing and CBI will still need to investigate corruption outside the Prevention of Corruption Act such as the Satyam matter. These are, of course, provisional positions because we cannot foreclose the options of the standing committee to whom the entire record of Parliament has been sent. The grouse that Parliament would not get to see the Jan Lokpal Bill has been put to rest. At the end of the day, Parliament takes a call on what is best for the country.

I am convinced that some of the aggressive language and conduct one encountered on the streets and cyberways cannot be debited to Anna. Many fellow travellers may have taken the road without invitations. There is much difference between a Gandhian demeanour and the movement that purportedly used some Gandhian syntax but had a lot more as well. Civil disobedience or satyagraha is, after all, much more than it appears on the surface.

But democracy has many other challenges. We should neither be condemned for any harsh utterances nor taken for granted on the extent of our public support. Politics is not about single-point positions - even if periodically some issue occupies centre stage. We truly want to bring about honesty in our national life. We need a strong and independent Lokpal but we also need a national renaissance.

The UPA government is not only up to this challenge, but also dedicates itself to that national aspiration. We as a nation are on the verge of making history. But this cannot be done without trust between the government and civil society. The foundations of our tomorrow cannot be laid on a deficit of trust. And while we busy ourselves in eliminating corruption, we must not lose sight of the growth story. India is as India does. Whilst we put our house in order, let us be careful about the message we send to the world.

The writer is Union minister for law and justice.

Corruption non-practising allowance

Amar Chandel

THE jailed netas were livid over the lack of basic amenities in prison. They first raised slogans in support of their demand for ATMs of Swiss banks on the jail premises, and then decided to go on a relay hunger strike for three hours every day after lunch.

A veteran of many mega scams advised them to shun the agitational path and instead use their forced leisure period – free from the worries of running the country – to mull over the reasons for their changed circumstances. So, the proposed fast was converted into a closed-door chintan baithak.

Speaker after speaker stressed the point that politicians had been treated as mere mortals only because of internal dissension. If all of them had stood together, nobody would have dared to question corruption by them. Only their fratricidal tendencies had emboldened the hoi-polloi to demand an end to their hereditary right. Even now it was not too late to restore their past glory. All that was needed was unity among politicians of ruling parties and the Opposition.

They pledged to close ranks in this hour of crisis and fight “one for all, and all for one”. A “Neta Bachao Front” was formed there and then.

It was pointed out that the demand for an end to corruption was a subversive move that could sound the death-knell of politics as a profession. Talented persons would not join the profession in the absence of adequate returns. Who would want to be a neta if he could not make good the investment made during elections at least a 100 times over?

One pesky leader even went to the extent of suggesting that they should file a PIL (politician interest litigation) that perks and perquisites given to them since time immemorial could not be withdrawn arbitrarily. When a lawyer-turned politician-turned-undertrial corrected him that speed money could not be claimed as a fundamental right, the former defiantly declared that there was no harm in trying. If courts objected, the leaders could always turn around and say that the advocate had exceeded his brief.

But the suggestion on which there was near unanimity was that if politicians were to be deprived of regular avenues of corruption, they must get non-practising allowance. It could range from Rs 500 crore to Rs 5,000 crore per year depending on their seniority and the position they hold.

The amount would be over and above the 10 per cent commission which must be legally granted to them for every project that they sanction, be it the construction of a bridge, road or railway line or the purchase of an aircraft or a ship.

If necessary, the Constitution must be suitably amended.

When it was pointed out that this may cause heart-burn among those who were heading less lucrative departments, it was proposed that there should be a Neta Relief Fund for economically weaker politicians. Each member should be given a subsistence allowance of Rs 10 crore per annum from it.

The Neta Bachao Front issued a warning to newspapers and TV channels that anyone devoting more than 5 per cent of its space/ time to the coverage of protests against corruption in the country would be treated as an enemy of the state. The licences of habitual offenders would be cancelled — to be restored only on under-the-table payment of Rs 200 crore each.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Floods kill 18, displace 100,000 in east India

BHUBANESWAR: Heavy flooding in eastern India has killed 18 people and displaced almost 100,000 over the past week, government and aid officials said on Monday, warning of more wet weather to come.

The floods were triggered by torrential monsoon rains across [Orissa](#) state, causing water levels to rise and overflow river banks, sparking an operation that saw helicopters drop off emergency food packets to help the stranded.

"We are face-to-face with yet another bitter [flood](#) that has claimed 18 lives with another six people reported missing," Orissa's disaster management minister Surya Narayan Patra told AFP.

He said the state government had evacuated tens of thousands of people from their waterlogged homes and was enacting relief measures to help a total of 1.7 million people affected by the floods.

Orissa's special relief commissioner Pradeep Kumar Mohapatra told reporters that access to 877 villages was completely cut off due to rising water levels and that 11,000 houses had been damaged.

"The numbers of people affected have doubled in just a few weeks and there is more rain to come," said John Roche, India's country representative for the Red Cross.

"Thousands have lost homes and livelihoods, leaving many wage-earners with no choice but to migrate to nearby towns to find work."

The strength of the annual June-September downpour is vital to hundreds of millions of Indian farmers and to economic growth in Asia's third-largest economy which gets 80 percent of its annual rainfall during the monsoon season.

Floods in neighbouring [Pakistan](#) have killed 138 people in the last month and affected up to five million more.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Planning Commission sanguine about economic prospects

Jaideep Mishra

The [Planning Commission](#) seems sanguine about economic prospects in the next [Five Year Plan](#), the 12th, slated to begin next fiscal, targeting as it is 9% growth in a draft approach paper. With the 11th Plan period, which concludes this year, notching just over 8% rise in output in gross terms - the earlier 10th Plan did post 7.8% increase - it is reasonable to aim for 9% rise this time around, it is averred. Now the very process of growth can boost the internal dynamics for change, and so rev up the trend rates. For instance, the marked doubling of young people (15-24 years) in education and training from 30 to 60 million, which the paper mentions, has the potential properly nurtured to boost efficiency levels across the board.

Yet, it is glaring that the approach paper mentions of innovation and the need for efficiency improvement only in passing, in the fag end, in the briefest of chapters. But the fact is that innovation is crucial for growth over the medium term and beyond, as path-breaking work has revealed over the past several decades.

The seminal insight goes back to the 1950s, when it was shown using US data that the bulk of the growth over the secular period was not so much because of increase in conventional inputs like capital stock and labour employed, as due to innovation, productivity improvement and better ways of transforming the factors of production - efficiently - into output and outcomes. Since then, umpteen studies for other economies, industries and sectors have all demonstrated that innovative performance is of paramount import for the growth process, and which is why it is imperative that the focus of policymaking needs to undergo a paradigm

shift as well.

The approach paper does mention that a [National Innovation Council](#) (NInC) has been set up, with a mandate to formulate a 'Roadmap for Innovations for 2010-2020'. The body plans to set up a national innovation portal, which would be a platform for collaboration and information, it is duly elaborated. And further that 13 state governments have already constituted state innovation councils. A few well-known instances of frugal innovation in industry and services in India are also stated, but what's wholly missing is the pressing need for new initiatives and proactive policy generally to shore up innovation economy-wide. The approach paper does add that to make up for the gaps in the innovation ecosystem, the NInC is 'considering the need for a professionally managed [India Inclusive Innovation Fund](#) which will invest in innovative enterprises engaged in providing solutions,' especially targeting those at the 'bottom of the pyramid'.

Note that in the last two decades, the mavens have shown that growth-enhancing policy initiatives include not merely openness to trade and investment, stepped-up research and development expenditure, or skill development and savvy entrepreneurship. What's strongly recommended are avenues for learning and doing, and to improve institutional factors coming in the way of innovation and creative change. Against the backdrop of rising yet relatively low incomes per capita, the expert suggestion is to focus on productivity improvements, to step up the quality of growth. The most important policy question then is how to increase the trend rate of growth of output by way of innovation and efficiency gains.

The NInC is said to be rolling out a 'toolkit', guidelines and best practices for improving the performance of industry clusters. But we need to incentivise capabilities and collaborations in concrete terms, by for example having a regular platform to diffuse innovation and

attendant capabilities, especially for small and medium enterprises via regular interaction from a learning and skill-upgradation perspective.

Greater diffusion of innovative practices broadly defined would pay rich dividends and solidly improve the growth potential by better leveraging knowledge, insight and available skills.

A cutting-edge innovation policy would be our surest bet to keep up the growth momentum here never mind the physical constraints on the ground, the worsening external environment, the relentless rise of the Chinese economy, et al. What is desirable is to gear up innovation systems by policy engineering a narrowing of gaps when it comes to capabilities and resource skills, and across sectors and industries. The approach paper does stress that revitalisation of state-level universities and colleges 'is critical'. The way ahead is to purposefully upgrade standards and performance levels in such institutions using innovative solutions and delivery systems that would effectively bridge the knowledge gap.

A well-functioning national innovation system also requires better linkages across production, resources and knowledge generation. The bottom line is that the main insight of modern growth theory is that innovative change - and not the usual addition of factor inputs - is the key driver of growth, and innovation needs to have pride of place in policy design.

EDUCATION

Education reforms :Need for reality check

CAUGHT between the politics of populism, the much required Bills for education reforms are awaiting a nod from both Houses of Parliament. If the success story of the Indian economy — which rests primarily on the service sector — has to be sustained, it has to pay heed to the educational needs of the 220 million children who go to school, and 13 million of these who reach up to the college level. In fact, according to the projection of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the number of 13 million college/university-going students should increase to 45 million by 2020. India's GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) — the number of children between the ages of 18 and 24 who go to college — is a sad 12.4 per cent, whereas in some developed countries it ranges between 50 per cent and 70 per cent.

To meet this moderate target of sending only 30 per cent of school passouts (45 million) for higher education, the country will need another 200 universities and 50,000 colleges, apart from raising the bar of the existing 800 universities and 26,000 colleges. That too in a short period of just nine years! Even if we ignore the jugglery of figures, the moot question remains: how is the ministry going to address the fundamentals of good education — good faculty and a fair selection system for both students and teachers in a system that presently leaves only about 12 per cent seats in the open category, thereby making higher education unrealistically competitive? Moreover, new institutions take time to build a reputation, the unrealistic rise in the cut-off percentages of the reputed colleges has already shown the widening gap between demand and supply for quality education. The need for education reforms is urgent yet the speed to achieve it is tardy.

Since 90 per cent of the youth are educated in state / public universities, these should be the focus of higher education reforms. At the same time, the targets cannot be met without the participation of the private sector. The way the government has allowed Section 25 of the Companies Act to establish educational institutions, it should simplify other vital issues related to higher education like the National Eligibility Test scheme as has been suggested by Kapil Sibal.

ENVIRONMENT

HINDU 10.9.11 ENVIRONMENT

Barefoot - Can non-violence succeed?

Harsh Mander

A just and humane society cannot be built by unjust and inhumane means...

In all of known human history, and in every society in every corner of the globe, some human beings have always been unjust to others. Those who oppress others variously wield the power of wealth, of ownership of land and capital; of claims of superiority of a specific gender, race, caste, ethnicity and sexuality against others; of greater physical strength and brute force; of weapons and state authority; and of claims of superior knowledge and religious sanction. This superior power is deployed against those who have less muscle, resources, social standing or influence, to extract submission and fear, cheap or free labour, or impose political, cultural or social domination, and physical and sexual control. The violence of oppression is sometimes naked, brutal and manifest; and in other situations is covert and internalised.

Equally, all of human history is also the story of resistance to injustice. Some heroic resistance, epic in scale and solidarity, plays out in open battles against formidable adversaries; other resistance is stealthy and hidden; some is collective, and some individual. A great many of these acts of resistance have failed in their ultimate objectives of eliminating the oppressor or forms and institutions of oppression. However, invisibly even many of these 'failed' efforts, big or small, solitary or cooperative, have contributed ultimately in eroding the hegemonic power of particular forms of oppression, even if these have not been extinguished or vanquished. Simultaneously, new and often more lethal forms of exploitation and injustice continuously evolve, and these generate ever-new strivings and forms of resistance.

Sanctioned by tradition

Most religious and many secular traditions valorise submission to power and even tacitly to the oppressive exercise of power, such as by men, the king, the headman, the male head of family, the village elder, the landlord, the priest and the warrior leader. Yet, simultaneously, both spiritual and other ethical codes also usually prescribe resistance to injustice as mandatory to good human action, and as indeed the highest duty. In the Hindu tradition, such resistance is deemed essential to dharma — a comprehensive idea that includes duty and morality (although this same dharma also prescribes ritual injustice to persons deemed to be of lower castes and gender). In Muslim traditions, the Prophet is said to have taught that when confronted with injustice, the least duty is to respond at least from the heart, by grieving and rejecting the injustice. The higher duty is to resist from the mouth, by speaking out against the injustice. The highest duty is to resist with one's hands, by acting against the injustice.

In the debates around the legitimacy of shedding blood to resist injustice, even those who call for abjuring violence usually nuance their pacifism and prohibitions on violent actions with exceptions for self-defence, or protection of those who are weaker and in imminent danger. The right to choose violence as a last resort for self-defence, and of assertion to protect oneself against violence, are relatively well-settled ethical and political principles, except with a small minority who advocate pacifism as an absolute fundamental.

Malayalam poet K. Satchidanandan writes an apocryphal parable of an encounter of Gandhiji with a raped pregnant woman, and a tribal Bhil youth who was tied to a tree by his landlord. The youth's tongue was cut off and body burnt because he drank water from the well of the landlord. The woman tells Gandhi: 'You are responsible for this. I could have cut him to pieces, but you taught us to loathe violence.' The Bhil also says

with gestures that he had endured only because to resist would have meant violence.

Gandhi replies to the young woman, 'Dear child, if teeth and nails were of no help, you could have saved your honour with your sickle or the kitchen-knife'. Gandhi then turns to the Bhil: 'Your axe would have helped where words failed you.' 'Then what about non-violence?' they ask. Gandhi replies: 'Nowhere have I said that it is wrong to harm the aggressor in order to save your life or honour; only it should be the very last resort...'

I love also the speckled wisdom of another Buddhist fable, to which I turn sometimes in moments of ethical doubt. A fierce and deadly cobra is converted to the code of non-violence by a Buddhist sage. The gentle and learned monk returns to the village where the cobra lives some months later, and finds him half-dead. Every passer-by kicks him, and children throw stones at him for sport. The sage is alarmed by the plight of his disciple, and asks the cobra why he allowed himself to come to such a pass.

'It was you who taught me to abjure violence', the cobra says to him. The sage replies: 'I did teach you not to bite people. But I did not tell you not to hiss!'

Perhaps the most persuasive argument mustered in support of violence for seeking justice is that violent resistance is the only effective recourse for the defenceless and powerless, when pitted against the brutal and unjust might of the state, often backed by corrupt and formidable corporate wealth. This is a practical rather than moral argument.

Not a failure

Arundhati Roy, for instance, illustrates the futility of non-violent resistance with repeated references to what she regards to be the failure of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA). But in fact I do not agree with her assessment of the NBA as a failed movement. This evaluation is based on a narrow and literal assessment of its direct local impacts. This epic non-violent movement — despite many flaws in strategy — caught the imagination of an entire generation, and altered fundamentally how the rights of millions of people displaced from mega-projects, and the social and environmental impacts of such projects, are perceived.

The Sardar Sarovar Dam has indeed been completed, with disastrous outcomes. But governments have been forced to move a long way forward from the dispensation which prevailed in the early decades after Independence, in which these projects were uncritically celebrated and the human and environmental costs simply regarded as inevitable costs of development. The Narmada Award provides greater legal rights at least on paper to displaced persons, including land for land, even though so far governments have actively withheld these rights, even by resort to subterfuge. Courts have passed many anti-people orders, and yet there have been progressive rulings as well, such as by the Madhya Pradesh High Court in the Maheshwar Dam case. There are no black and white victories in these battles: they often play out incrementally — with the proverbial two steps forward and one step back — but I do believe the direction is forward. I have no doubt that if the people of the Narmada basin had not fought their brave and protracted non-violent battle, displaced people everywhere would have been more dispossessed today. I do not call this failure.

Struggles that succeeded

There are many examples of exceptional success of non-violent struggles. I have written separately about the extraordinary achievement of the Safai Karmchari Andolan to help bring an end to one of the most stubborn and degrading practices of untouchability, of manual

scavenging or the cleaning and carrying of human excreta by women of designated castes. They have done this by combining mass mobilisation and judicial interventions, and achieved outcomes which even a decade earlier would have seemed impossible. Gandhi himself battled against religious violence, and ultimately lost his life in this battle, after the country had been partitioned on religious lines. Yet the movements that he led are not failures: Pakistan was created on grounds of religious identity, but the majority of Indians, both Hindu and Muslim, opted for a pluralist democratic State, and this idea of India survives continuous assaults by religious fundamentalists.

I believe — and the experience of human history bears me out — that it is violent movements which are much more likely to fail to achieve their initial stated objectives. Justice can never be violent or retributive: its intrinsic character is compassionate, measured and wise. It is self-evident to me that it is impossible to build a just and humane society by means which are unjust and inhuman. The outcomes of strategies which are built around bloodshed, vengeance, repression and hate will always ultimately be brutal and unjust, even if the violence is undertaken for lofty ideals.

HEALTH

Health hub slips on hostel deadline

SUMI SUKANYA

There is “no room” for most of the medicos in the state’s premier health institution Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH). There is no deadline either for the completion of the construction work of a new boys’ hostel.

Sources said a multi-storeyed boys’ hostel on the hospital campus has been under construction since 2006. Public works department (PWD) is still carrying on with the snail-paced construction work for the four-storeyed building. The hostel is supposed to house the postgraduate medicos and interns.

The health hub authorities had not set any deadline for the completion of the construction of the hostel.

“No deadline was set for the PWD to complete the construction work of the boys’ hostel. Honestly, we did not anticipate that the (construction) will get so delayed,” PMCH principal Dr N.P. Yadav said.

He pointed out that it has not been possible for the PMCH authorities to figure out who exactly is responsible for the delay in the construction.

“Whenever, an official was contacted, he blamed someone else for the delay. They (the PWD officials) kept passing the buck, as a result of which we have not been able to understand who to blame for the present situation,” Yadav added.

With the hostel construction work still going on, most of the postgraduate students of PMCH are forced to stay outside the college. Mismanagement, encroachment and lack of provision of sufficient

accommodation in the hostels have worsened the situation.

“At present, there are three hostels meant for the postgraduate doctors on the campus but most of the rooms in these hostels are occupied by squatters and unauthorised inmates. They have either passed out from the college or were never a part of the PMCH. But they have been occupying the rooms for the past several years. While we have not been allotted rooms for the past three years, the college administration is not bothered to remove the encroachers,” said a postgraduate diploma student, requesting anonymity.

He added: “There are about 650 students who study here as junior doctors or interns. Most of them are not allotted berths in the hostel despite the fact that according to the manual of a medical college, students are required to stay on the college premises.”

Another postgraduate medico said: “Even those students who managed to get rooms, are those on whom the earlier occupants took mercy. Officially, there is no documentation of rooms and there are no allotments either. So, if one wants to find a certain student in these rooms, there are no official records for assistance.”

The lucky ones, who managed to get rooms in the available hostels, are not happy either. “There is no maintenance. Moreover there is a lack of basic amenities, hygiene and security in the hostel where I stay. The rooms are damp, dingy and are full of mice. Broken walls and floors are a common sight in the hostel. Water, sanitation, electricity and food are not up to the mark,” said a junior doctor, who stays in the hostel above the outpatient department.

PMCH authorities admitted that providing hostel accommodation to a large number of undergraduate and postgraduate medicos was a major challenge. But they failed to explain why the proposed building was taking so long for completion.

“It is true that most of the postgraduate medicos have to do without hostel facility on the campus and they have to stay outside. On our part, we are doing everything to ensure that maximum benefits are provided to them but the agencies involved in the works have created a lot of problems. We have been asking the PWD to expedite the construction of the postgraduate hostel for boys, but they have not been completed so far. We will again question them in this regard,” Yadav told **The Telegraph**.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

GREATER COMMON GOOD

- In politics, protecting the people's interest comes first

K.P. Nayar

Critics of West Bengal's chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, who accuse her of having overshadowed Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh, have conveniently short memory. The chief minister faces two types of critics.

Those who have been associated with the government in the past — many of whom are in office now — only have to sit back and recall identical events of two decades ago in order to exonerate Mamata. But others in the Congress party who have resorted to a low-intensity, simmering campaign against her may have to revisit the past to realize that the Biblical wisdom in the Gospel of John is Mamata's defence against her critics on the Teesta river water sharing controversy.

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” Jesus told a mob which wanted to execute a woman accused of adultery. History is proof that by that Biblical yardstick, Congressmen have no right to say anything critical of Mamata for having forced the Prime Minister's Office to pull the Teesta accord out of Singh's agenda in Dhaka.

Shahryar Khan was Pakistan's foreign secretary from 1990 to 1994. The scion of the princely family of Kurwai in Madhya Pradesh and son of the eldest daughter of the last Nawab of Bhopal, Khan and J.N. Dixit sportingly competed in Urdu *shayari*, flinging catchy, but deeply meaningful lines at one another when Dixit was India's high commissioner in Islamabad.

By the time Khan arrived in New Delhi on August 16, 1992 for bilateral talks, Dixit had left Islamabad and become foreign secretary in P.V.

Narasimha Rao's government. Dixit and Khan held three days of talks, one of the longest meetings between the foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan. The two foreign secretaries worked out an agreement on the dispute over the Siachen glacier. After Khan received the green light for the settlement from Islamabad, Rao agreed that the resolution of the dispute should be announced the next morning. The foreign secretaries talked over dinner on the night of August 18 and decided that their meeting would be extended till next afternoon to complete the settlement.

But on the morning of August 19, Rao had second thoughts about signing the Siachen pact. Those in Rao's inner circle at that time insist that it was an early morning phone call from Sharad Pawar which made the prime minister go back on the agreement.

Pawar had been inducted as defence minister a year earlier, after his thwarted bid for the prime minister's job following Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. Rao's aides say that Pawar, in his phone conversation with the prime minister, expressed unwillingness to go along with the Siachen accord. Rao had been a consensus prime minister for just over a year and had not yet fully consolidated his position either in the party or in the government. He could not risk a revolt by the powerful satrap from Maharashtra.

Khan had already briefed some of his friends in the media the previous night about what he had agreed with Dixit and at least one Indian newspaper, if memory serves right, carried an eight-column banner headline that the Siachen dispute was history. The report was factually right, but had been overtaken by events by the time readers saw it at their breakfast tables the following morning. Rao feared that his defence minister would resign if he went ahead with the Siachen settlement and pulled back from the agreement at the eleventh hour.

In today's Congress party, of course, it is unacceptable to cite Rao as a

fit example to be followed. But the party's history in office cannot be whitewashed or rewritten with impunity. So Mamata is guilty of nothing more than what a previous Congress prime minister had done. And for good reason.

Agreements on thorny issues are not easy to negotiate among friends at the best of times. When it comes to disputes between India and Pakistan with their history of wars and low-intensity conflict, difficulties in arriving at settlements are almost always insurmountable.

The worry about last week's aborted Teesta agreement is that, as in the case of the 1992 Siachen draft settlement, once they fail to cross the last but most formidable barrier, it is never an easy task to resurrect the mutual trust and accommodation that facilitated a hard-won resolution of the dispute.

After the failure of the August 1992 talks on Siachen, India and Pakistan made one more attempt to resolve the problem. The governor of Jammu and Kashmir, N.N. Vohra, who was defence secretary during that period, laboured with his Pakistani counterpart, Syed Salim Abbas Jilani, for three days in November 1992 to flog back into life the understanding reached between Dixit and Khan two and a half months earlier. They even fine-tuned the proposals and backed them up by a detailed cartographic explanation of the settlement in the hope that they would be acceptable to the political leadership in New Delhi and Islamabad. But the efforts by Vohra and Jilani came to nought.

What the prime ministers of India and Bangladesh must guard against, now that the Teesta agreement has been put on the backburner, is that this pact does not suffer the same fate as the Siachen agreement. Negotiators in New Delhi and Dhaka must not forget in the coming weeks and months that despite Manmohan Singh's determination to seek peace with Pakistan, he has not been able to revive the Siachen pact which was almost signed nearly two decades ago, but had to be

abandoned under circumstances very similar to those that forced the PMO last week to allow the river water sharing agreement to fall by the wayside.

Public memory being notoriously short, it is tempting to accuse Mamata of being tactless, clumsy and diplomatically insensitive in the way she inflicted what was without doubt a blow to the prime minister's trip to Bangladesh. But here again, history would absolve the West Bengal chief minister who has, in a sense, merely taken a leaf out of Dhaka's book, especially the Sheikh Hasina Wajed edition of her country's diplomatic guidebook on relations with India, so to speak.

For much of the first 25 years of Bangladesh's existence, the sheet anchor of its relations with India was the Indo-Bangladesh treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation which was modelled on a similar treaty between India and the Soviet Union. The two treaties were signed seven months apart from each other. Durga Prasad Dhar, Indira Gandhi's close associate who was ambassador in Moscow twice, told this columnist long ago, as a young reporter, that Indira was never keen on the treaty with Dhaka, but went along with the idea to humour Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who wanted something more tangible than a joint statement or a declaration at the end of the prime minister's first visit to Bangladesh in March 1972.

Mujib felt that a mass of between eight and nine lakh Bangladeshis who gathered for Indira's public meeting was not enough of a tribute to her. According to Dhar's account, Mujib called Indira "Didi" when the two were together and kept asking the visiting prime minister to suggest a centerpiece for her stay in Dhaka. It was Dhar, who had earlier been involved in work on the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, who proposed a similar treaty to Mujib.

Notwithstanding her father's imprint on the treaty, however, Sheikh Hasina joined the chorus against its renewal when it was approaching its

25-year expiry date. Indeed, it was during her prime ministership that Bangladesh decided that the treaty which her father sought and got from Indira Gandhi would be allowed to lapse.

That episode ought to remind Mamata that there is no room for sentiment in politics and that she should be guided solely by her political instinct and a desire to protect the interests of the people who elected her to office in dealing with the Teesta accord rather than by some vague desire to give in to the prime minister's uncertain effort to improve relations with Dhaka, the results of which may well be unpredictable.

Making haste slowly

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

The shameless drift of the UPA has certainly buoyed the BJP. But the jury is still out on whether the party can fully come to terms with the obdurate realities of Indian politics. At the moment, the BJP's strategy seems to be this. The UPA is giving such a huge target that no matter where the BJP shoots, it can hit the bull's eye. But there is a real danger in indiscriminate shooting if your own defences are not in order.

The fact of Indian politics is that much of it is local. There are moments of crisis, where a party can hope to mobilise on a national wave. But we are not at that moment yet. The BJP's ground-up strategy looks as shaky as that of the Congress. The BJP's weakness in Uttar Pradesh is still a huge handicap. Nationally, it is competitive in probably close to 200-odd seats. It will have to peak simultaneously in all of those to be a serious contender. A national campaign may energise some of its cadres, but if it is not matched by local depth, the party may still remain a flotsam on the top.

The second challenge is leadership. L.K. Advani has tried to seize the initiative by calling for an anti-corruption rath yatra. But the dividends of such a move are doubtful. The BJP's own anti-corruption credibility is by no means unimpeachable. Advani has often been better on vague rhetoric than on governance details. In the current atmosphere this can be politically counter-productive. Instead of contributing to a more nuanced debate, the BJP will plunge headlong into acceding to over-the-top demands from civil society. There may also be an outbidding war in the BJP. Varun Gandhi's pre-emptive interventions, coming out in

support of Anna Hazare before anyone else, and his rather pointed question on the BJP's silence on the Reliance CAG report, suggest potential for embarrassment from within.

But Advani is also, at this moment, a symbol of the BJP's governance failures and ideological confusions. In the last decade, his three singular contributions to the party have been to make its talk about internal security look hollow, to veer the party away from being a force of economic reform, and to mistime political interventions. The cash-for-votes scam will yield political dividend only if there are startling new revelations. It is a slender basis for political mobilisation.

BJP supporters are enthused by Narendra Modi. Even his detractors grant him this. He has shown great administrative acumen. In an age of indecisive mendacity, he satisfies yearnings for a leader who can decide. He has a mass base, to the extent that any politician in India does. In principle, the courts can still embarrass Modi. But the fact that the Supreme Court referred a potentially embarrassing case back to the lower court has been a victory of sorts for him.

But too strong a projection of Modi complicates issues for the BJP. The BJP's hardcore supporters tend to be an oddly apolitical bunch. Their own sense of certainty makes them tone deaf to the circumstances of politics. Politics at a national level requires a capacity to be able to negotiate diverse constituencies. Hazariprasad Dwivedi's sage observation that "Bharat ka lok nayak wohi ho sakta hai jo samanvaye kar sake" remains as true now as ever. Semi-presidential politics can work at the state level. But it does not automatically translate into the capacity to inspire confidence of a wide range of political sensibilities and allies. This is generally a challenge in a large parliamentary system. This is why state leaders are unable to transcend their states. And the BJP should not descend into the self-defeating narcissism of thinking that it does not need a strong NDA. Atal Bihari Vajpayee gave the BJP

an unparalleled advantage in part because his persona, for all its failings, could project a credible liberality. Machiavelli warned that we should esteem those who are liberal, not those who decide to become one. This warning still hovers over any assessment of Modi. But he will be more acceptable if he is ensconced in a structure that is more reassuringly liberal than he is.

Modi is, however, a shrewder politician than his supporters are. His new letter is less about making a play in national politics than it is about consolidating Gujarat. One ought not to exaggerate the significance of recent elections in Gandhinagar. But no one in power for long durations is invulnerable. His supporters argue that his refusal to tender an unequivocal apology for the 2002 riots stems from an uncertainty over what the legal ramifications of even a political statement might be. But the truth is that there was fairly widespread tacit, if not explicit, ideological approval of the riots. The issue is not whether Modi apologises, but whether Gujarat can have a genuinely candid conversation about that horrendous episode. He has managed such an identification of himself and Gujarat, that at this juncture he cannot be seen to apologise without betraying Gujarat. The very context that gives him his political strength makes reinvention difficult. This does not rule out his prospects entirely. The more dysfunctional democracy becomes, the more yearning there will be for figures like him. But his supporters are underestimating his challenges.

Modi's strategy is to change the subject: concentrate on economic success. But the paradox at the national level is two-fold. While the BJP wants to own Gujarat's economic success, it is for some reason strangely reluctant to press for key reforms and become a party of aspiration rather than a party of mere opposition. But the more Modi is in the limelight, the less the conversation will be about reform. Unfortunately, there are still enough political elements in both the BJP and the Congress who want to make national politics a debilitating debate over secularism.

Both may yet oblige each other. But it is probably more in the BJP's interest to not fall into the trap.

There are three big pluses for the BJP. First, the way it handled the Karnataka crisis by using internal party democracy showed a degree of institutional maturity. Such institutional invention might be the best way of coping with a leadership crisis. Second, the UPA is determined to run the economy into the ground; inflation will remain a potentially explosive source of discontent. Third, anti-Congressism now has a genuine momentum. But the BJP will have to avoid a politics where each leader upstages another, where it indiscriminately latches onto agendas it will regret and where it underestimates its need to build broad coalitions. It needs to make haste slowly.

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IMMATURE YOUNG INDIAN MINISTERS

New-age leaders

Rajdeep Sardesai

The Average age of the cabinet ministers after the reshuffle is 65 years while 60 is the average of UPA-II's council of ministers.

If politics were to mirror celluloid, then clearly our netas seem out of step. A fortnight ago, two Hindi films were released: 'Buddha Hoga Tera Baap' and 'Delhi Belly'. The first had the legendary Amitabh Bachchan trying to recreate the magic of the 1970s, the second was a multiplex movie with young actors designed for the MTV generation.

Trade figures suggest that 'Delhi Belly' in its first week grossed twice as much as the Amitabh starrer. The main reason seems to be the demographic dividend: for a country where 60 per cent of the population was born after the original Amitabh hit 'Zanjeer', 'Delhi Belly' with its irreverent, almost blasphemous humour, has struck a chord with young India. Crude and crass it may be, but D K Bose is clearly the flavour of the season.

By contrast, the cabinet reshuffle (or political kho-kho as suggested by former Maharashtra chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh) which took place this week appeared to embody an older India. The average age of the cabinet ministers after the reshuffle is 65 years while 60 is the average of UPA-II's council of ministers. While 14 cabinet ministers, including the prime minister, are in their 70s, just one -- Kumari Selja -- is in her 40s. A majority were born before India got independence in 1947. The average age of the ministers of state -- normally considered a nursery for 'young' politicians -- is a rather 'seniorish' 54 years.

Of the three ministers of state under 35, all of them -- Sachin Pilot,

Agatha Sangma and Milind Deora -- are the dutiful children of influential politicians. It would be fair to assume that had they not been blessed with a political surname, their chances of being made ministers would be dim. In any case, being a minister of state in an elephantine cabinet is more ceremonial than substantive. All this in an era where a 45-year-old David Cameron is shaping the face of Britain, while a 50-year-old Barack Obama is poised for re-election in the US.

The easy option would be to blame the ancien regime in Indian politics for the predicament. After all, it is the old guard in politics that zealously guards the principle of seniority, partly because of tradition, but also at times out of necessity. The value of grey hair cannot be devalued in government: politics is not a game of cricket where matches can be won and lost by young legs.

Wisdom is a rare quality that can only be enhanced with the passage of time. Mastering the working of government requires administrative experience that can't be learnt in B school alone. Give me a 76-year-old tried and tested Pranab Mukherjee as finance minister any day compared to a foreign educated 40 something politician who may have the right vocabulary but can't deal with the complexity of governance.

Fresh ideas

Unfortunately, the so-called 'young guns' of Indian politics have done themselves few favours by remaining prisoners of their lineage but offering little else by way of fresh ideas. A number of them are democratic dynasts, sons and daughters of politicians who see electoral politics as an extension of their family fiefdom. Blessed with an exaggerated sense of entitlement, we rarely see them speak out in parliament, take up socially relevant issues or give us a sense of what they stand for.

If our young MPs claim to represent young India, then why don't we see them take up issues that directly impinge on generation next: jobs,

education, corruption, environment, morality, AIDS, even gay rights. When the Article 377 judgment was delivered in the Delhi High Court, we didn't hear a squeak from our younger MPs, almost suggesting an inner social conservatism that didn't quite match their outward 'liberal' appearance.

When the Lok Pal anti-corruption campaign gathered momentum this summer, we again didn't hear from our young MPs, reinforcing a reluctance to publicly commit to a clearcut stand on a contentious issue. It wasn't always like this. The Nav Nirman agitation in the 1970s that eventually sparked off the anti-Emergency movement began on university campuses. Student activists then were unafraid in taking on the establishment and raising the concerns of the young. Many of them went to jail fighting state power.

Today, the youth outfits of political parties are like glorified event managers: the BJP Yuva Morcha organised a high-profile Tiranga Yatra that had little to do with youth concerns while the Congress's NSUI seems happy enough to parade Rahul Gandhi at well-choreographed interactions in college auditoria. Where is the cut and thrust of new ideas that should shape the minds of a new India?

But all hope is not lost. At a recent Young Indian leaders' conclave, the Congress's 40-year-old minister, Jyotiraditya Scindia, delivered an impressive speech on the need for preserving the idealism of the youth. At the same function, one met some remarkable young men and women who have become true change agents.

Take 32-year-old E Sarathbabu from Chennai. Growing up in a slum colony, he worked his way to IIM and then started a successful idli business that today employs several hundred people. He contested the Tamil Nadu elections, lost, but intends to fight again. The day the Sarathbabus are able to break open a closed and ageing political system, India will be a better place.

Post-script: Rahul Gandhi still stays away from joining the government. We are told that he feels he is not ready yet. When a youth icon doesn't want to take up a ministerial responsibility at the age of 41, is it any surprise that we have one of the oldest cabinets in the world?

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Gujarat is now more industrious

Chitra Unnithan

AHMEDABAD: [Rural Gujarat](#) is fast catching up with its urban counterparts in terms of both income and savings, says a study by faculty of [Indian Institute of Management](#), Ahmedabad (IIM-A). At the national level, however, the gap between urban and rural consumers is widening in income, consumption and savings with people in villages lagging further behind, the study says.

The study - Estimating Urban and Rural Incomes in Gujarat, 1993-94 to 2004-05 - by IIM-A faculty members Ravindra Dholakia and Manish Pandya, a research officer at the department of economics and statistics, government of Gujarat, also breaks the myth that urban areas are centres for manufacturing.

The study says that rural areas in Gujarat are becoming more productive, efficient and centres for large-scale, registered manufacturing activities, while urban areas are becoming centres for the small scale, unregistered manufacturing and service sector activities. "It is clear that rural areas in Gujarat are growing faster than the urban areas in terms of income originating and hence in terms of employment opportunities.

This needs to be explicitly recognised while formulating and implementing any programmes and schemes to generate more rural employment artificially," Dholakia said. The study has considered incomes of three benchmark years - 1993-94, 1999-00 and 2004-05 for the estimates. The estimates indicate that during 1993-94 to 1999-00, per capita state income at current prices increased by 98%, urban income by 86%, and rural income by 101%. During 1999-00 to 2004-05, the per

capita state income at current prices grew by 69%, urban income by 63%, and rural income by 74%.

Thus, rural per capita incomes in Gujarat grew faster than urban per capita incomes during 1993-94 to 2004-05.

The study suggests that since the investment behaviour of rural Gujarat is likely to be significantly different than more educated and environmentally more exposed urban investors, efforts need to be taken to divert these additional savings to better schemes from unproductive channels of gold, silver and land. In the country as a whole, on the contrary, the urban consumers have greater concentration of income that results in higher consumption and savings.