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CIVIL SERVICE

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG 29, 2014

Soon, attendance of govt staff to be tracked online

Written by [Ruhi Tewari](#)

any registered employee yields complete details, along with the employee's attendance/leave status.

Summary

The Modi government had recently directed all central government offices to introduce Aadhaar-based biometric attendance systems.

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In what could be a revolutionary step towards monitoring and tracking the work of government officials, the NDA government has launched an "attendance website" to serve as a centralised database for all central government employees.

Though the website, attendance.gov.in, is still in the process of being developed, officials said it is expected to be modelled on the lines of similar websites of the Jharkhand government and the Department of Electronics and Information Technology.

To illustrate, the home page of the Jharkhand government's attendance website gives the total number of employees present on the given day, along with graphical representations of "real-time attendance" and statistics on the percentage of people logging into office during different time slots, giving an idea of how many officials come to office during the designated timings. Further, a search for any registered employee yields complete details, along with the employee's attendance/leave status.

Officials said the Centre's website is likely to emulate most of these features and is expected to be as open to the public. "This level of open tracking takes transparency to another level, a key focus of this government," said an official.

The Narendra Modi government had recently directed all central government offices to introduce Aadhaar-based biometric attendance systems. Officials said this website is the next step in that direction. The attendance record entered on the biometric devices in government offices will feed the data to this website, which will act as a centralised management information system (MIS) for attendance.

The database for all central government staff will be maintained centrally with a unique six digit ID provided for each employee, based on either the last six or first six digits of the Aadhaar number. Currently, the website has over 16,000 registered users, spread across 113 organisations. The maximum number of officials registered currently are from the Planning Commission. There are no active users or active devices yet.

For an organisation/ department to be registered, the nodal officers of that department will have to login to the website and create a master list of locations of their offices, designation of their offices and divisions/ units/ groups within their organisation. Following this, each employee can start registering online by submitting the relevant details along with Aadhaar numbers.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, AUG 30, 2014

New secretaries appointed for civil aviation, steel, green and other ministries

Senior IAS officers V Somasundaran and Rakesh Singh were on Friday appointed as new secretaries in ministries of civil aviation and steel respectively, reports PTI. Somasundaran, who is serving in Kerala, will take over the charge from Ashok Lavasa, who has been appointed secretary in ministry of environment and forests. Somasundaran is a 1979 batch IAS officer of Kerala cadre. Lavasa, a 1980 batch IAS officer of Haryana cadre, will replace V Rajagopalan, a 1978 batch IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, who superannuates on Sunday. Rakesh Singh will take over the charge of steel secretary from G Mohan Kumar.

HINDU, AUG 28, 2014

Odisha Civil Service prelims exam results scrapped

Just a day after the Orissa High Court ordered the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) to dispose of an application pertaining to Odisha Civil Service (Preliminary) Examination-2011, the Tribunal on Tuesday scrapped the results of the preliminary examination published in June.

Disposing of the application filed by Priyambada Das of Rourkela, the acting chairman of the Tribunal S. N. Das quashed the results and directed the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) to publish afresh results within two months after awarding pro rata grace marks to students wherever required.

With this direction from the SAT, the OPSC is now in a quandary and there is confusion among students about the Main examinations, which were scheduled to begin on September 6. OPSC sources on Wednesday said they would soon take a stand after examining the SAT judgment.

Priyambada along with two other unsuccessful candidates approached the SAT alleging that aspirants of some subjects in the preliminary examinations were awarded full grace marks for wrong questions and questions with printing mistakes. As a result, many students got full marks even though they did not attempt those questions.

Disapproving the manner in which grace marks were awarded, the Tribunal asked the OPSC to evaluate the answer sheets again and award pro rata grace marks for the wrong questions on the basis of the marks they have obtained in the other questions.

The OPSC issued an advertisement in October 21 and conducted the preliminary examinations after many hiccups in January. From over 50,000 students, at least 5,823 were declared qualified to appear in the Main examinations.

A candidate complained of indiscriminate awarding of grace marks

STATESMAN, AUG 28, 2014

Govt employees told to furnish assets

New Delhi, 27 August: The government has instructed all Central government officials to declare their assets and liabilities and also that of their spouses and dependent children by 15 September. As per the notification issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DOPT), all employees of the Central government, except peons, have to disclose details of their property and liabilities to the Central government by 1 April to 31 July every year. Since the notification was issued last week only, this year's deadline has been fixed for 15 September.

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 25, 2014

PMO now a strategic HR manager, to analyse officials' skills to fill up top vacancies

By [Vikas Dhoot](#)

The idea behind the initiative is to get the right men for the right job to implement the Modi government's agenda over the next 5 years.

NEW DELHI: Over the past fortnight, two senior bureaucrats, recently empanelled as secretaries to the government of India, were surprised when they got a call from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). They were asked about their areas of interest and the departments they might be interested in handling as and when an opening comes up.

The phone calls are part of a larger informal human resources competency mapping exercise being driven by the PMO to identify the best officials suited for vacancies that have arisen and would arise in the central government in the coming six months. The idea behind the initiative steered by additional principal secretary in the PMO PK Mishra, is to get the right men for the right job to implement the Modi government's agenda over the next three to five years, said officials.

This human resource management exercise is part of the Prime Minister's efforts to make a clean break from the UPA tradition where ministers had a disproportionate say in babu appointments, said officials. There has been no purge in the bureaucracy as many policymakers had feared after the change of government on May 26 another sign that this government is thinking differently from its predecessors.

The manpower planning effort is not restricted to the top echelons of departments and autonomous agencies, but includes roles at the [joint secretary and additional secretary](#) levels too. Indicating that the Modi regime would rather think through its appointments

rather than fill up vacancies in a huff, one of the first vacancies to arise under this government, for a [joint secretary](#) in charge of exploration issues in the petroleum and natural gas ministry, is yet to be filled.

"The new government has neither affected a major bureaucratic reshuffle nor is it in a hurry to fill vacancies as it wants to identify the strengths and weaknesses of top officers before deciding their next roles. The PM's personal interactions with secretaries and the PMO's assessment of the challenges facing each department are likely to play a crucial role in the Centre's personnel strategy in coming months," said a [senior official](#), requesting anonymity.

Just three weeks after taking charge, Modi had reconstituted the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet to a two-member body comprising the PM and home minister [Rajnath Singh](#).

"The PMO has a firm eye on achieving big-ticket outcomes of this government by 2018-19, so it is not thinking of vacancies as a short-term problem that needs to be plugged," said another official, adding that ministries have been asked to upload all major vacancies that are arising in their domains, including their public sector undertakings and autonomous bodies onto an online vacancy tracking system.

TIMES OF INDIA, AUG 27, 2014

IAS officers look for a 'swap'

HYDERABAD: Shocked at the way cadre allocation process was held this week by the department of personnel and training (DoPT), several IAS officers are now planning to use what is known as a 'swapping option' to stay back in Hyderabad.

Swapping is possible when two officers, belonging to different states, request the DoPT to change their cadre on personal grounds. But in all cases of swapping, a no-objection certificate (NOC) from both state governments is necessary.

After the DoPT released the list of officers provisionally allotted to the two states on August 22, there has been a flood of visitors to the offices of the AP and Telangana chief secretaries. Officers who met IYR Krishna Rao and Rajiv Sharma enquired about the NOC if they can get a candidate willing to swap their cadre.

Some officers have already managed to finding swapping partners. Kona Sridhar, who was allotted to AP, has swapped his cadre with M Dana Kishore for Telangana. While Dana Kishore belongs to the 1996 batch, Sridhar is from the 2003 batch of IAS.

Under the DoPT rules, officers are even allowed to swap with retired officers whose name is in the list, as the cut-off date for IAS officers was originally June 1, 2014. For instance, Mudavat Naik, who belongs to the 2005 batch, was allotted to AP, but has

changed his cadre to Telangana by swapping with J Ramanand of 1979 batch. Ramanand had retired on July 31, 2014.

Swapping within the same batch was allowed by the DoPT in the provisional allotment also, resulting in the change of cadre for several officers. Rajeswar Tiwari, who was allotted to AP, swapped with his batchmate Satish Chandra, who was allotted Telangana in the roster.

"There are no clear guidelines on swapping and nobody has been informed about the existence of such a facility. Those who were privy to the information have already prepared the NOC and sent it to the DoPT. The information about cadre allocation was leaked to some," alleged some officers, who have now decided to file an RTI application to DoPT and make the minutes of the Pratyush Sinha committee meeting public.

Officers are seeking to know how the draw of lots executed on August 16 was completely changed in the provisional allotment on August 22. "After the draw of lots, those who attended the meeting went on record saying that it went in favour of Telangana and all three senior-most officers in IAS, IPS and IFS would go to Telangana. But in the end, all of them were allotted to AP," pointed out a senior official.

With many officers now rushing to the AP chief secretary with requests of swapping, sources said he has assured them not to take a hasty decision and promised a good future in the new state. But, officers are not convinced and are still looking to get an NOC for swapping.

Bureaucratic symbiosis

* Under the DoPT rules, two officers, belonging to different states, can request for a cadre swap on personal grounds

* In all cases of swapping, a no-objection certificate (NOC) from both state governments is necessary.

* Officers are even allowed to swap with retired officers whose name is in the list of allottees as the cut-off date for IAS officers was originally June 1, 2014

* Officers are now rushing to the chief secretaries of both states with enquiries about this option as many of them want to stay back in Hyderabad

HINDU, AUG 27, 2014

Chief Secretary allows self-attestation to replace affidavits for govt. services

Asks officials to list services for which affidavits could be waived

The Delhi Government is considering doing away with affidavits except in cases where it is a statutory requirement and instead making a provision for self-attestation while providing services to citizens.

At a meeting chaired by Chief Secretary S.K. Shrivastava, heads of departments from across the government were asked to examine the possibility of abolishing the requirement of submitting affidavits.

Officials have been asked to look into drafting application forms for the provision of various services in such a way that it contains an undertaking that states that facts stated are correct and informs service seekers that they may be penalised for providing wrong information.

Mr. Shrivastava has asked them to submit the list of services provided by different departments for which affidavits could be waived by August 31. The move is seen as helping citizens from locating a deed writer, buying stamp papers, and saving from making payments to notary and executive magistrate and a pecuniary loss of Rs. 300-500 on average per person. Further, the Chief Secretary said requirements of various documents at the time of admissions may be dispensed with only self-certification and attestation and asked the officers to launch awareness campaigns to give wide publicity to the reforms through websites, banners and boards and the laws that will apply in the event a citizen submits false information.

Officials directed to submit list of services for which affidavits could be done away with by August 31

STATESMAN, AUG 25, 2014

Centre allots IAS, IPS & IFoS officers to Telangana, AP

New Delhi, 24 August: The Centre has finalised draft allocation of IAS, IPS and IFoS officers between the newly formed Telangana state and residuary Andhra Pradesh. About 163 posts of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), 112 of Indian Police Service (IPS) and 65 Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officers (including promotees) have been provisionally allocated to Telangana, a Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) order said.

With this order, Andhra Pradesh will have 211 posts of IAS, 144 of IPS and 82 of IFoS officers, it said. The DoPT has issued officer-wise list for IAS, IPS and IFoS and put it in public domain.

The composition of the three all-India services is based on a recommendation by a six-member committee headed by former Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) Pratyush Sinha.

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 25, 2014

4.5 lakh students appear in UPSC prelims

Over 4.5 lakh students on Sunday appeared in civil services preliminary examination which passed off incident-free at various centres across the country after being mired in controversy following protests over change in its pattern.

As many as 4,51,602 candidates took the examination, about 1.27 lakh more than the last year, at 2,137 centres in 59 cities. "There were no incidents of protest from any of the centres in the country. We are very happy that the examination went off peacefully and without any law and order problem," Union Public Service Commission Secretary Ashim Khurana told PTI. He said none of the chief secretaries of states, where the examination was conducted, reported any incident of protest.

"All officials of UPSC, Department of Personnel and Training and chief secretaries successfully coordinated for peaceful conduct of the examination," he said. A total of 9,44,926 candidates applied for the examination and of these, 6,80,455 downloaded their admit cards for appearing in the test. "As many as 4,51,602 candidates took the examination in various exam centres spread across the country. About 1.27 lakh more than last year," Khurana said.

A total of 3,24,101 had appeared in civil services preliminary examination in 2013. The UPSC had this time chosen 14 new cities including Varanasi, Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, Gwalior and Jabalpur for conducting the exams. In Delhi alone, there were 222 examination centres. "As many as 66,787 candidates appeared for the examination from Delhi," said Khurana, a 1983 batch IAS officer of Gujarat cadre. The preliminary examination consists of two papers - Paper I and Paper II of two hours duration each. The first paper began at 9:30 AM and second started at 2:30 pm.

Some of the students complained of "errors" in Hindi translation of questions asked in English in Paper I. Both the government and UPSC officials did not comment on the issue. A controversy had recently erupted over the pattern of examination as students demanding change in Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT) or Paper II, had taken to the streets in a violent agitation, claiming it put aspirants from rural areas or Hindi background at a disadvantage. In the wake of such protests, Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh had on August 4 said in Parliament that marks of the English section questions, asked in Paper II, will not be included for gradation or merit in civil services exam.

The DoPT and UPSC had issued separate instructions not to attempt questions of English language comprehension skills asked in Paper II of the examination as their marks will not be included in the gradation or deciding on merit. The Paper II carries questions on comprehension, interpersonal skills including communication skills, logical reasoning and analytical ability, decision-making and problem- solving, general mental ability, basic numeracy and English language comprehension skills (of Class X level).

However, a group of students said they will continue with the protest. "We are against the pattern of civil services examination. We want a change in its pattern," said Sampooranda, who is part of a students' movement 'Nagrik Adhikaar Manch'. The prestigious civil services examination is conducted in three stages--preliminary, main and interview-- by the UPSC to select IAS, IFS and IPS officers among others. Hearing an eleventh-hour petition filed by a group of protesting students, the Supreme Court had yesterday declined to postpone today's preliminary examination.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, AUG 25, 2014

Reform plan panel, don't replace it

There is a lot of debate on whether India needs a Planning Commission. Two arguments which deserve consideration are that the environment in which the Commission was constituted in 1950 has changed substantially and that the private sector is now the main driver of economic growth. Both are valid but they merely make out a case for reforms in the Commission as well as other systemic reforms across the government. Some have attacked the Commission by saying that chief ministers had to come annually with a begging bowl to the panel. This is clearly not based on facts. The CMs came for discussions on their plans in the context of national priorities. The Commission has resources given to it by the ministry of finance and these were distributed in accordance with the Mukherjee-Gadgil formula. Only for northeastern states and Jammu & Kashmir, did it make special considerations.

The reforms in the commission are clearly overdue. Under our Constitution, we have the directive principles of state policy, which mandate the provision of education, healthcare and good quality of life to all citizens. We also need to look after our less-developed areas. These include northeastern states, J&K, the 85 left-wing extremism affected districts, eastern UP, north Karnataka and tribal areas of central, western, and eastern India. We also need a special focus on private investments to step up economic growth keeping in mind the diverse needs of different regions. Two key areas which will improve efficiency of government expenditure are monitoring and evaluation through independent agencies. The co-ordination amongst different ministries for improving efficiency and better outcomes requires a body to support it. For example, nutrition requires co-ordination between the ministries of water resources, health, sanitation, education, and women and child. Governance has become important for states as well as the Centre. There are international obligations too, viz. The Millennium Development Goals. All this requires systemic changes.

Reforms that address the above areas will redefine the activities of the Commission. Given the large share of private investment in the economy, we need to prepare an indicative plan document for next two decades with broad directions. This exercise was attempted in the Commission for the energy sector. Similar exercises now should be done, in consultation with states, for natural resources like coal, transport, education and infrastructure, particularly railways, ports and airports.

The second area of reforms, which will cover large number of ministries, is setting up a mechanism for improving efficiency of investments. It is possible to do so by improving governance, strengthening the mechanism for concurrent evaluation and monitoring and better co-ordination in areas like nutrition, transport, energy and education. This needs a separate wing in the Planning Commission. Regional development requires extensive studies for identifying programmes and specific policy interventions on the pattern of the Backward Regions Grant Fund.

The above approach will need a change in the organisational structure of the Planning Commission, consistent with our federal structure. The first emphasis should be on the panel's interface with the states. The National Development Council (NDC) is too big a body to provide such a forum on an ongoing basis. We should set up a National Development Group presided over by the PM, with about 16 CMs of states and administrators of Union territories as members. One-fourth of the states on the group may be changed every quarter. The Planning Commission, the heads of the Union ministry of finance and a few major ministries could also be members. This would, in addition to NDC, provide a forum for dialogue and interface.

The Commission's knowledge base needs to be strengthened. A beginning with induction of young professionals has been made. We must be able to identify people from Universities, technical institutions, private sector and major institutions of scientific research to have people on deputation or on a contract basis. The plan panel should have full powers to recruit this way and not be hamstrung by a maze of regulations.

Concurrent evaluation cannot be left to the Independent Evaluation Office, which must focus on larger issues. For central schemes, we must have a large number of institutions spread over the country and a body of technical experts, which can evaluate the schemes. The model that I have in mind is of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

Private investments, including PPP, would require a large wing in the plan panel and corresponding cells in the ministries and the states. There are questions relating to concession agreements, transparent selection, contingent liability, and mid-term negotiations in terms of failures or problems in projects. All this requires detailed research of global work and the experience of the states.

The structure for a knowledge base can be experts as members of the Commission coordinating with think-tanks across the country. Experience in South Africa tells us that without any financial allocations or ability to influence and strategise resource allocation to different sectors, the Planning Commission or a replacement would be a toothless body preparing papers that the ministries may not even bother to read. The needs of various

sectors, the backward regions and states and the need for investment for a 21st century India have to be understood well. Planning Commission should, therefore, have the powers to allocate resources for different purposes. To make the panel itself a think-tank is not a good idea and would not serve the needs of national development.

BK CHaturvedi

The author is former member, Planning Commission and former Cabinet secretary

HINDU, AUG 28, 2014

Needed, a Growth Commission

C. RANGARAJAN

An organisation to look at the basic issues confronting the economy, and to prepare a broad framework on how long-term issues can be resolved, is still a necessity

CHANGING TIMES: The concept of planning has changed: while in the 1950s, it was the most appropriate tool for ushering in faster economic growth, we've now moved to an era of indicative planning. Picture shows Jawaharlal Nehru signing the Second Five Year Plan which particularly discussed economic growth at great length.— PHOTO: THE HINDU ARCHIVES

There is a need to evaluate and restructure every organisation as circumstances change and the Planning Commission is no exception. Restructuring an organisation can be of two types. One approach takes the functions of the organisation as a given and proceeds to restructure it to make it more effective to fulfil those functions. The second approach is more fundamental. It questions the very basis of the organisation and focusses on the relevance of the basic functions it has been performing. It is the second type of restructuring that we are talking about in relation to the Planning Commission.

Relevance now

The Planning Commission has a distinguished past. Many eminent men and women have adorned the position of Deputy Chairman and Member. The question that is posed now is about its relevance in the current circumstances. The Planning Commission now performs three types of functions. First and foremost, it draws a blueprint for the country's economic development over a five-year period. It also outlines a detailed strategy for achieving the goals and objectives enshrined in the blueprint which we call the Plan. The plan exercise outlines not only how the broad macroeconomic parameters are expected to move, but also a sector wise analysis of what needs to be done. After approval of the Five Year Plan, the Planning Commission in consultation with the Finance Ministry also determines the annual plan. The determination of the "size" of the annual plan of each State is a major exercise and has been a cause of much irritation.

Second, flowing from its function of determining the size of plans for States, the Planning Commission allocates funds to States, the distribution of which has again been a contentious issue.

Third, the Planning Commission has a key role in the formulation of various policies and programmes. It critically assesses the individual programmes of Ministries. Major projects are also assessed and approved by it. It is this function which resulted in a parallel unit corresponding to every Ministry being established in the Planning Commission. It would be useful to analyse which of these functions remain relevant and which of them can be discarded or transferred to other authorities within the government.

Ushering in faster growth

Planning was perceived in the 1950s as the most appropriate tool for ushering in faster economic growth. The strategy for achieving this was discussed at great length, particularly at the time of the formulation of the Second Five Year Plan. This was consistent with the thinking at that time that the state must have control over the “commanding heights.”

Times have changed. In the post-liberalisation period, the concept of planning itself has undergone a change. We have moved, at best, to an era of indicative planning. The blend of public and private investment has tilted in favour of the private sector. While planning of the type we had in the first five decades after Independence has no relevance, an organisation to look at the basic issues confronting the economy, and preparing a broad framework on how long-term issues can be resolved, is still a necessity. If there is an acceptable framework on what the critical issues are and how they should be tackled, it will provide a suitable basis for policy formulation.

While the state may play a diminishing role, it still plays a critical role in the economy. In the infrastructure sector, it still has a dominant role. If the Centre and States agree on a broad framework through discussions, it would facilitate the adoption of better policies. Such an organisation will be something more than a think tank. Through a broad range of discussions, it should prepare a road map which will be acceptable to both the Centre and the States. Thus, the task of preparing a blueprint for the country over a certain period is essential and should continue to be performed. Also, there are issues which cut across Ministries, such as energy, transport, water or environment. In terms of policy formulation, this commission can take a holistic view and offer advice.

The second function of allocating resources among States is somewhat debatable. There is a strong view that the Finance Commission is the appropriate constitutional authority for allocating resources. Of course, the Planning Commission has also been following a formula for allotting funds among States but the quantum of transfer of funds through this mechanism has been diminishing. Much larger funds from the Centre flowed through the centrally sponsored schemes and this was performance-based. Given the States’ aversion, it may be best that this function is fully entrusted to the Finance Commission.

The third function of evaluating projects and giving approval has also raised many controversies. The Ministries regard the implementation of projects as their prime responsibility and very often consider the Planning Commission as a hindrance.

While having a ‘second look’ is always an advantage, leaving this task entirely to the Ministry seems appropriate. The Planning Commission has been looking at restructuring itself. In fact, the Committee on Public Expenditure Management, of which I was the Chairman, had made the point that the distinction between plan expenditure and non-plan expenditure should go, and the Planning Commission should take a comprehensive look at public expenditure in the key sectors. The result of making a distinction between plan and non-plan expenditures has been that we have had situations of hospitals without doctors and schools without teachers because one is treated as plan and the other as non-plan. In fact, within the present structure of the Planning Commission, the federal element could have been enhanced, if, besides Central Ministers, some Chief Ministers were also included as members. This would have given it a national character.

The current practice of “approval” by the National Development Council has also not been satisfactory. Even when some Chief Ministers differed on the strategy, very few changes were made. At the end of a long day of discussions, the plan is taken as approved.

A task that must continue

As we move ahead, there are critical problems facing the economy. Ensuring a faster rate of economic growth with equity is not an easy task. Environmental considerations have emerged as a serious concern. Therefore, an integrated look at the problems faced by the country over a five-year period is very much required. Thus, the need for an organisation for formulating ideas on how to shape the economy over a certain time frame will be helpful. This was the task which the Planning Commission was performing with some success and this must continue.

If the word “planning” is reminiscent of an earlier period, it may be substituted by “development” or “growth.” The other two functions performed by the Planning Commission now can be delegated to other authorities in the government. The allocation function can go to the Finance Commission and project evaluation can be taken care of by strengthening the Ministries. Thus, a National Development Commission or Growth Commission, which is charged with a mandate to prepare a blueprint with goals and objectives to be achieved over a defined period, may still be the need of the hour. This document can then be discussed by the National Development Council, a political body.

(C. Rangarajan is former Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.)

Through a broad range of discussions, the commission should prepare a road map which will be acceptable to both the Centre and the States

HINDU, AUG 26, 2014

An ode to the Planning Commission

SHIV VISVANATHAN

The old aphorism “old soldiers never die, they just fade away” might also be a story of the fate of most institutions. However, it was not true of the Planning Commission, which was terminated brusquely. This Independence day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hardly gave it a few lines. One of the most hallowed institutions of the Nehruvian era was dismissed from history as an anachronism. There was no goodbye, no obituary, no sense of nostalgia. A great institution died as less than a footnote. As a wag noticed, “People get rid of their old cars with a greater sense of loss.” Such a dismissal makes a spectator reflective.

Planning was a vision, a part of the nationalist movement and its history goes back to a many stranded dream of linking knowledge and power to serve society. Three names in particular get invoked when we think of planning as an idea. The first is the physicist Meghnad Saha, the second, the engineer M. Visvesvaraya and the third, the eccentric Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes. Each idea, each career demands a storyteller as each one of these founders was a remarkable intellectual.

Russian model

Meghnad Saha was an ionospheric physicist, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and who had been nominated for the Nobel. Saha carried the dreams of physics into society and always dreamt of a society based on the scientific method. For Saha, the Gandhian way was anathema and he condemned it as a “society based on the loin cloth and the bullock cart.” Saha was also contemptuous of Congressmen who he felt had no conception of industrialisation. Saha’s model was Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution where Lenin and his scientists had created a new relation between science and power through the Russian Academy of Sciences. His exemplar was G.M. Krzhizhanovsky, a scientist who conceptualised civilisation in terms of levels of energy. It was thanks to Krzhizhanovsky that Lenin could coin the slogan “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.” It was a great dream of energy, scientific and romantic. Today, the Russian Revolution sounds distant and discredited. But in the 1930s, Russia was literally utopia; the Stalinist destruction of Russia had yet to be fully enacted.

Science and the future

In 1938, Meghnad Saha went out in search of his Lenin. His brother’s friend, Subhash Bose had just been elected President of the Indian National Congress. Saha felt it was an optimal time to end the Gandhian epidemic and asked Bose what he intended to do. Bose asked him what he wanted and Saha proposed the establishment of the National Planning Committee. The Congress meeting was held in Delhi in 1938. Saha attended it a day late and in the meanwhile, Visvesvaraya had been elected head of the Planning Committee. Meghnad Saha approached the great engineer and requested him to step down. He argued that planning needed a reciprocity between science and politics. Visvesvaraya generously agreed and Jawaharlal Nehru was made head of the National Planning Committee. Nehru’s legendary speech, that the future belonged to science and that “dams and

laboratories are the temples of modern India,” was only a watered-down variant of the Leninist dreams of energy.

Saha’s utopia of planning met its variant in Visvesvaraya. Visvesvaraya was a legend, a part of the folklore of Karnataka, a great engineer known for his immaculate dress sense and honesty. For Visvesvaraya, character-building, dam-building and nation-building were equivalent activities. The emphasis was on planning and discipline, an emphasis which extended to his private life. Visvesvaraya was immaculate in differentiating between the public and the private. Legend has it that he always carried two fountain pens, one for official use and the other for personal use. When one reads his memoirs, one feels it reads like a policy document. The eccentric and the innovative combined brilliantly in this life. Visvesvaraya’s ideas of planning also included the first ideas of car manufacture. He was closer to business and this stream of ideas culminates in the Bombay Plan, a business model of planning.

Role of the region

The third idea of planning stemmed not from the centrality of the nation but from an emphasis on the critical role of the region. Patrick Geddes combined ecology and locality, to emphasise that the region was the ideal unit of planning. Geddes’ idea of geotechnics eventually culminated in the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), a great dream of regional planning which revived a stagnant America. Geddes also developed the idea of educational and urban planning in India. He wrote town plans and was involved in the planning of Tagore’s Shantiniketan. In fact, there is a fascinating fragment in one of the Tagore-Geddes letters where Geddes emphasises the need for planning and Tagore responds by admitting that he builds a school in the same way he writes a novel, a germ of an idea that spontaneously grows into an essay or school. The debates of science in the nationalist movement are fascinating. The least we owe the history of the idea of planning is a book which captures these ideas. Planning today summons controversy. It earlier summoned the storyteller to tell tales of the dreams of science in India. To condemn it to silence would be to insult history.

The Nehruvian years of planning had a halo of the power and resonance of knowledge. The second Five-Year Plan became legendary in its emphasis on heavy industrialisation. But, by then, the ironies begin. Meghnad Saha, defying the powerful B.C. Roy, stands as an independent to go to Parliament to challenge Nehru’s “betrayal” of the idea of planning. He was the only scientist to have ever been elected directly to Parliament. Saha died of a heart attack, in 1956, a few hundred yards from the institution he created.

The later history of planning has many other legendary movements. One thinks of the great consultants to the Planning Commission like Nicholas Georgesceau-Roegen, E.F. Schumacher and the Polish economist Kalecki. One also thinks of J.C. Kumarappa, the Gandhian. The story has it that Kumarappa wanted to attend a Planning Commission meeting in a horse-driven *Tanga* and was detained by security, which did not quite believe that Planning Commission members travelled in *Tangas*. It needed a phone call from Jawaharlal Nehru to clear the impasse.

I remember my first encounter with a Planning Commission member. It was at the Delhi School of Economics in the 1970s. As a student, one would watch Prof. Sukhamoy Chakravarty waddle into the department, trailed by a load of books, absorbed in the latest issue of *EPW*. He would walk on, oblivious of everyone while immersed in the magazine. He seemed to be the ideal intellectual, a voracious reader, soaked in knowledge, serving society. The Emergency years were to end the halo of planning. In fact, in many ways, the Emergency was a crisis of planning where family planning and urban planning acquired an almost pathological edge.

Challenges

The Emergency created a whole gamut of question marks around economics and planning, questioning the democratic pretensions of both. A whole spate of social movements challenged the logic of planning, chronicling the devastation called development. Simultaneously, the other social sciences began questioning the scientific pretensions of economics and also the scientism of science. Ecology added to planning a reflectiveness it had not dreamed of. By the 1990s, planning was no longer a major social gestalt. It was now a technocratic, bureaucratic body, centred around fragmentary debates. The legend had shrunk but its power to determine life chances remained.

By the time the results of Mr. Modi's victory were declared, the future of the Planning Commission was in doubt. There was a sense that planning was impervious to the needs of the new federalism. In his Independence Day speech, Mr. Modi dismissed and dispensed with the institution without a footnote of thanks. There was a sadness to his rank indifference. But politics cannot dismiss history. Planning was once a great idea, a wonderful fable of the dreams, even the arrogance of knowledge. It was a great experiment which became erratic, but its history, its genius, its innovations need to be told and told fully. This much even the critics of planning owe this great institution.

(Shiv Visvanathan is a professor at Jindal School of Government and Public Policy.)

By the 1990s, planning was no longer a major social gestalt. It was now a technocratic, bureaucratic body, centred around fragmentary debates. The legend had shrunk but its power to determine life chances remained.

Planning was a vision, a part of the nationalist movement and its history goes back to a many stranded dream of linking knowledge and power to serve society

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 27, 2014

Planning Commission replacement shouldn't allocate funds, say experts

The new institution could play the role of a 'think tank'

Sanjeeb Mukherjee

A high-level meeting to frame a new body to replace the [Planning Commission](#) is learnt to have arrived at a broad consensus that allocation of [Plan funds](#) should not be the domain

of the new entity but of the finance ministry. The new institution, it was agreed, could play the role of a "think tank".

Officials in the know, however, said some had disagreed with the proposal. They felt if allocation was handled by the ministry, it could become extremely powerful, as there wouldn't be adequate checks and balances in place.

"The experts felt the appraisal function of schemes and programmes, which the Planning Commissions used to perform, should be handed over to the finance ministry," an official said.

There was also a view that the new body could carry out long-term planning (with a 10-30-year horizon), the entire funding for which should be decided beforehand, without pre-empting contributions by state governments.

Officials said the matter would now be decided by the prime minister.

They added there was a broad agreement that all important officials in the new organisation should have adequate domain knowledge, unlike the existing practice of appointing bureaucrats to these posts. "Issues such as how big the new body will be and who its members should be weren't discussed at the meeting," an official said.

On interaction with state governments, officials said the view was the ministries concerned should be responsible for that.

Among those who participated in Tuesday's meetings were former ministers [Yashwant Sinha](#) and Y K Alagh, former Planning Commission members [Bimal Jalan](#) and Saumitra Chaudhuri, Bharatiya Janata Party leader M J Akbar, former chief economic advisor Shankar N Acharya, Business Standard Ltd Chairman T N Ninan, National Statistical Commission Chairman Pronab Sen, senior journalist T C A Srinivasa-Raghavan, former finance secretary Sumit Bose, economist Surjit Bhalla, Centre for Policy Research Chairman Pratap Bhanu Mehta and ICRIER Director Rajat Kathuria.

"They (the participants) have all given some brilliant suggestions. All these (ideas) will be compiled and sent to the prime minister," said Yashwant Sinha.

Officials said a consensus had emerged that the new body should engage in vision-building; the issue of whether or not this should be through five-year plans didn't see unanimity.

On the oft-repeated question of devising a new body on the lines of China's National Development and Reforms Commission (NDRC), officials said most experts felt the new entity wouldn't be able to perform that role, as NDRC was extremely, second only to the politburo in that country.

BIRTH OF A NEW BODY

Broad consensus

- Plan allocation should be handed over to finance ministry
- Important postings in new body should be of domain experts, not bureaucrats
- Not possible to make the new body as powerful as China's NDRC

Disagreements

- Finance Commission to be made a permanent body
- On whether the new body should frame five-year Plans

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 27, 2014

Abheek Barua: More government, more growth?

The author asks: how much growth can good governance get us?

Abheek Barua

Good governance" falls in the "motherhood and apple pie" category. Who could argue against less [corruption](#) in the bureaucracy, fewer inspections by pesky factory inspectors and an end to the "*sifarish-firman*" raj that politicians have ruled over? However, given the fetish for [good governance](#) in the current political discourse, a question worth answering is, what difference does governance make to growth? Economists have been examining this for decades. Most mainstream researchers agree that good governance is a necessary condition for growth. This, by extension, means that differences in growth across countries can be explained at least partly by differences in the quality of governance.

But first things first. What exactly is this governance? [Daniel Kauffman](#) (in "Growth without governance", a [World Bank](#) discussion paper from 2002) defines a measure of governance that considers a basket of six things: voice and accountability; political stability and the absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption. This has emerged as the gold standard of governance measures, and most researchers use a variant of this. While there appears to be a consensus in the mainstream, there are notable voices of dissent on the necessity of governance for growth. [Jeffrey Sachs](#) and his collaborators (in "Ending Africa's growth trap", a Brookings paper from 2004) argue that differences in growth across Africa have nothing to do with governance. Instead, they can be explained by levels of old-fashioned

aid-financed investments. The least "governed" states have actually produced spectacular growth rates.

Recent work on India throws up some interesting results. Maitreesh Ghatak's and Sanchari Roy's somewhat controversial article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* ("Did Gujarat's growth rate accelerate under Modi?" in April 2014) does not find any significant acceleration in Gujarat's growth rate (relative to the national average; this is important) for the 2000s decade (the Modi years) compared to the 1990s. If I were to assume (and I am sure that many would agree) that the regime quickly ushered in a substantially improved governance structure, then one clear implication is that the growth-governance link is weak.

Analysis of state-level data by [Sudipto Mundle](#) and his colleagues at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy ("The quality of governance: how have Indian states performed?" in July 2012) finds a positive but statistically weak relationship between the "quality" of governance (again gauged by Kauffman-type measures). This perhaps is a rigorous way of stating the obvious - that a whole lot of things other than governance determine growth. However, it is worth highlighting in the current political context.

The research on governance is not just about these somewhat sterile statistical links. There are many other insights that our policymakers who think about governance could take cues from. A paper by Rafael La Porta and three co-authors ("The quality of government", National Bureau of Economic Research, 1998) analyses the experience of a large sample of economies over a long period and arrives at a number of powerful insights. Of particular interest to India is their assertion that government intervention and efficiency are not mirror images. Let me quote them: "We have consistently found that better performing governments are also larger and collect larger taxes. Poorly performing governments, in contrast, are smaller and collect fewer taxes." The authors are quick to point out that this is not an endorsement of bigger government of any quality. Instead, they assert that "identifying big government with bad government can be highly misleading". This might give us reason to rethink the "less government, more governance" mantra that is so much in vogue these days.

The proposition that big government is not necessarily a bad thing is linked to the question of what governments should be doing in the first place. Traditionally, the role of governments was to address market failure through non-market institutions, and this drove the governance agenda in between the 1950s and the 1980s. The most extreme form of this non-market intervention was central planning that relied on mechanisms such

as industrial licensing. India, like others, botched this up completely; the result was a combination of severe macroeconomic problems and the proliferation of rent-seeking activities and rampant corruption. In short, market failure was replaced by government failure.

The backlash against the failure of this model came from mainstream economists whose prescriptions were administered by agencies like the [International Monetary Fund](#) and World Bank touting a model of "market enhancing governance" that would jettison the planning approach and instead replicate the conditions of an efficient market. This would be implemented through a combination of things: stable property rights; low transaction costs; and minimising rent seeking and corruption. An extreme but popular view was that since government intervention breeds corruption and rent seeking, an obvious solution would be to have a small government.

What this agenda misses is the entire business of state capacity. Government intervention failed because the government simply did not have the capacity to do the things it was trying to do. Mushtaq Khan, an economist at London's School of Oriental and African Studies (in "Governance, development and economic growth since the 1960s", a working paper from 2007) argues that while one cannot argue with the objective of creating efficient markets, developing countries might not have the capacity to do this either. Markets in developing countries, he argues, are inherently inefficient and the kind of improvement in state capacity required is difficult to achieve.

The second proposition that Mr Khan and others make is that recent history shows that efforts to "enhance markets" haven't quite paid off (take Latin America in the 1990s, for instance). What appears to have worked very well, instead, has been the kind of governance structures - "growth enhancing governance" he calls it - that led to a boom in East Asia. These experiments - the creation of the chaebols in South Korea using public resources; the setting up of the town and village Enterprises in China and their subsequent privatisation; the channelling of credit in South Korea to priority industries - all made a substantial contribution to contribution. Some of them appear to go against the principle of the "market enhancing school" since they involve state intervention to correct for market failure. Be that as it may, the bottom line is that they have worked well. India has learnt to "look East" in many domains of our economic and international relations strategy. Perhaps we should look East when it comes to deciding on a model of governance as well.

The writer is with the ICRIER. These views are his own

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 25, 2014

Planning Commission: No successor in sight

Economists divided, with no clear answer to what could take over its multiple functions more effectively

Aman Sethi

On the cusp of the general elections this summer, Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh](#) posed a set of questions to the [Planning Commission](#) he had headed for 10 years.

"Are we still using tools and approaches designed for a different era?" Singh asked, wondering if the body needed to take on additional roles, like improving governance, to remain relevant to the growth process.

The answers came too late. On May 29, three days after [Narendra Modi](#) was sworn in as Singh's successor, the [Independent Evaluation Office](#) (IEO) - an ombudsman attached to the Commission - gave a 12-page report recommending "the Planning Commission be abolished and its staff returned to their parent cadres."

Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the Commission would be replaced by a "new institution", with a "new body and soul and with new direction".

The PM's Office (PMO) has since invited public comments on the possible form of the successor. Yet, opinion is divided if a new entity could avoid the pitfalls of its predecessor.

The questions are twofold. What will succeed the 63-year-old organisation? And, is the abolition of the Commission the end of the five-year plan, the most visible manifestation of the Indian government's intervention in the national economy?

Montek's point

In an interview with this newspaper in May, the Commission's former deputy chairman, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, said its many roles could not be wished away. The Commission, he noted, allocated plan resources, appraised programmes and evaluated policy, all the while balancing the financial needs of the states with the abilities of the Centre.

"If you abolish this body, you would have to assign these tasks to some other body," he said, "This would make it very like the Planning Commission." The current plan - the

12th since the Commission was set up in 1951 - runs till 2017 but is due for mid-appraisal later this year.

"The [12th plan](#) is premised on eight per cent annual [GDP](#) (gross domestic product) growth, while the Jaitley Budget is premised on unusually high tax collections," said an official, "Neither of these targets are likely to be met, so the current plan would have to be substantially revised."

IEO

So, who would carry out this revision or abandonment of the 12th Plan, and who will guide Centre-state relations in the post-Commission future? The [IEO](#) report offers the only publicly available template for the Commission's successor: The Commission's roles are split into three, with the [Finance Commission](#) (FC) taking on the responsibility of allocating centrally collected funds between states and the Centre, funds between various central ministries will be distributed by a specially created department of planning within the finance ministry, and a think-tank will provide the government with policy guidance.

"The great heyday of centralised planning ended with the third plan [1961-66]," said economist Bibek Debroy, who has been linked to the new entity in media reports, a speculation he denies, "Today, most resource allocation is done by the private sector." Debroy said he was broadly in favour of the abolition of the Commission but was keen to see what replaced it.

Budget data suggest that, over the past two decades, total central funds routed through the Commission to the states varied between 3.5 and five per cent of GDP (see box). The FC could handle this money, as it already allocates central tax revenues. Further, the FC is a constitutionally mandated body, answerable to Parliament, unlike its Planning counterpart - which was created by, and is answerable to, the PMO.

"But the FC has a very narrow technical focus, unlike the Planning Commission which has a broader developmental approach," said economist Abhijit Sen, who was a member of the earlier Planning Commission and is a sitting member of the FC. "The FC is a small organisation, with limited capabilities."

Meanwhile, the IEO model suggests, the finance ministry could allocate money between central government departments. Debroy said the finance ministry in any administration is under pressure to reduce budgetary deficits. "They tend to slash social sector expenditure and capital expenditure," he said, "You need a counterweight like the Planning Commission to make a case for social sector expenditure."

The think-tank could do that, but the problem is, Sen said, "No one listens to a think-tank unless it has some powers." In the Planning Commission's case, it had the power to delay disbursement of funds for central schemes by insisting states follow programme guidelines, which probably proved to be its undoing.

How to balance?

In June 2013, Modi arrived at Room 122 of the Planning Commission in his capacity as Gujarat chief minister. In his presentation, he expressed his disapproval of central legislation like the Right to Education Act that imposed financial liabilities on the states by demanding state funds to match central grants.

"As a result," the presentation noted, "the states are required to alter their own development priorities and set aside funds to meet the liabilities created by the central legislation."

Modi's comments have been echoed by many CMs over the years. Economists like Arvind Panagariya have called for the end of central schemes in favour of block grants, to allow states to choose their development priorities. Central plans, the argument goes, ignore the differing development stages and capacities of India's diverse states. Without central schemes, there shall be no need for a commission to plan, design or evaluate them.

"The [CSS](#) (centrally sponsored schemes) were evolved precisely to incentivise the states to spend more in critical areas," former deputy chairman Ahluwalia said in his May interview with Business Standard, even as he said the Commission was moving to make the process more flexible and less cumbersome. "But a key issue is that we were not doing old-fashioned central planning anyway," he said in an email this week.

Ultimately, Sen said, the new dispensation shall have to decide how to direct development in the states; the shape and form of the successor shall follow.

EDUCATION

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 28, 2014

Delhi engg college hired unqualified staff: probe

Mallica Joshi

An enquiry committee, set up to look into the complaints of irregular appointments at Delhi Technological University (DTU), has revealed in its report that the institution hired seven teachers who did not possess the requisite qualifications.

Its probe has also revealed that there were several other candidates who met the requirements but they were not even called for interviews.

The enquiry was ordered by Lieutenant Governor Najeeb Jung after teachers at the university alleged that the administration had hired teachers who did not possess the requisite qualifications for the posts of professors and associate professors in 2012. Vice Chancellor PB Sharma was sent on leave to ensure a fair enquiry.

As per the report, in one case, the selection body treated a candidate's MSc Marine Engineering degree equivalent to MSc Mechanical Engineering/Automobile Engineering degree. He was called for the interview but did not join.

In another case, a candidate who was not cleared by the scrutiny committee as he had not secured a first division in undergraduate studies was selected and continues to teach at the institute.

According to the report, one candidate who did not meet the minimum eligibility criteria was called for an interview at the insistence of the Vice Chancellor.

“The inquiry committee finds it unacceptable that prescribed essential qualifications and relevant experience as advertised should have been selectively relaxed in the aforementioned cases, whereby not only have these candidates been irregularly called for interviews but also selected,” the report states.

The report, however, does not just talk about irregular selections but also rejections. As per the report, in 2012, the committee scrutinised a sample of 50 applications of a pool of 300. Of these 50, three applications should not have been rejected as they appeared to fulfill all requirements, the report states.

The report was submitted to the Department of Higher Education in late July. The teachers are now demanding for a more thorough enquiry of all 2012 appointments. “There are more cases of gross violations. We demand a more in-depth enquiry,” said a teacher on the condition of anonymity.

TIMES OF INDIA, AUG 30, 2014

Biometric system to record attendance of CSA teachers

Kanpur: Biometric identification system had been fixed in Chandra Shekhar Azad Agriculture University to ensure punctuality and discipline among staff. The machine had been installed in all outstation centres.

"We often used to get complains that teachers and other staff do not report on time. The university has Krishi Vigyan centres in 18 districts, where teachers are appointed and they ought to stay there. In order to keep a check on their presence and timings, vice-chancellor Munna Singh decided to install biometric identification system in all kendras," university spokesman Naushad Khan said.

Staff member will have to record attendance three times a day during working hours. The system had been installed in the Central Library at Kanpur. "We have observed that now the staff members have become cautious. They come 10 minutes before their official reporting time. It has proved to be a relief for students," Khan said.

He added that they are planning to install more biometric systems in administrative offices, which include comptroller office, registrar's office and V-C office. In near future, these systems will also be fixed in all departments of the university.

STATESMAN, AUG 30, 2014

CU launches online grievance redressal mechanism

Calcutta University has started an online grievance redress mechanism on its website where students can lodge their complaints about any problems they might be facing in the institution.

The move comes after it was noticed that in absence of a proper redress mechanism, students' unions have been interfering in the day-to-day affairs of colleges. Prof. Suranjan Das, Calcutta University V-C, said that after logging in to the CU website, students should register their name and registration number so that University authorities can keep a tab on the complaint.

"If students do not want to identify themselves, they can log in with their respective registration number so that University authorities can identify the complainant," Prof Das. added.

Senior officials of the state government added that in recent times there has been much interference by the Trinamul Congress Chhatra Parishad (TMCP) in various colleges affiliated to the University, with certain students even threatening teachers in various state-run colleges.

A few days ago, the principal of Chapra Bagalji Mahavidyalaya Prof Krishna Gopal Ray, first tendered his resignation after he was threatened for protesting against mass cheating

by the students belonging to the TMCP, but later withdrew after state education minister Mr Partha Chatterjee gave him assurances that the matter would be probed. A section of officials also see in the episode differences between TMCP president Mr Sankhudeb Panda and state education minister Mr Partha Chatterjee, and hence the decision to start a redress mechanism.

After Prof Ray submitted his resignation, Mr Chatterjee had called Mr Panda and warned him that he would not tolerate any such incident in the future. There have been various instances where the TMCP has been accused of taking bribe from students for admitting them to college courses. The latest instance was at Bhaktabala B.Ed college where the general secretary of the college. Mr Tanmoy Acharya was removed after he was found to have taken bribes from students for admission.

INDIAN EXPRESS, AUG 27, 2014

Under Government Control

[M M Ansari](#)

Summary

Under the UGC Act, the HRD ministry has the power to declare any institution a “deemed to be university” (DU).

By M.M. Ansari

The ministry of human resource development has constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Hari Gautam for the “review of University Grants Commission for its restructuring and strengthening to address the challenges of higher education”. The government’s order shows that as many as 14 terms of reference (ToRs) have been identified for the committee. A cursory glance at them indicates that the UGC is unable to fulfil its mandate to promote, coordinate and maintain standards of university education, or to disburse funds to eligible institutions. This is probably due to the internal inefficiency of the UGC.

The ToRs, however, do not take note of external factors, particularly the legal handles through which the functioning of the UGC is tampered with by the HRD ministry. The problems that are not included in the ToRs but are responsible for the ineffective functioning of the UGC are as follows. First, the UGC is the only national commission which functions with part-time, non-executive members (10), most of whom are serving vice chancellors or college principals, funded and regulated by the UGC themselves.

The government does not feel it necessary to appoint full-time experts to guide and manage the vast education system. Nor does it see any conflict of interest in appointing serving heads of educational institutions as members. Such an organisational structure was deliberately created and is being retained by the Central government. In effect, the UGC functions as a subordinate office of the HRD ministry, toeing the Centre’s line.

Second, under the UGC Act, the HRD ministry has the power to declare any institution a “deemed to be university” (DU). In exercise of this power, as many as 130 universities, largely under private management, have been established. Sensing the preferences of successive governments, the UGC from time to time gives the “desirable” advice, whenever sought by the ministry, to create such institutions. Of late, the credibility of a few DUs has been questioned. The Tandon Committee, which scrutinised the performance of DUs at the behest of the HRD ministry, recommended the closure of at least one-third of them (44). But this has not been done, mainly because of a lack of political courage.

Education is a subject on the concurrent list. Since 2009-10, the Centre has not been entertaining proposals for establishing DUs. Most state governments have encouraged the establishment of private universities and colleges as profitable ventures to reduce their burden to support higher education.

Business houses and industrialists have established their own colleges and universities with the support of political parties in power. Over 80 per cent of universities and colleges are under private management and over 60 per cent of students study at these institutions. Public universities are hardly effectively operationalised in terms of infrastructure or staff, which is why none of them makes the top 200 in global rankings. The Centre and states should act responsibly in providing a policy framework and resources to promote quality education rather than casting aspersions on bodies like the UGC, which is heavily dependent on the ministry for legal and administrative support, for funding higher education and for hiring the services of specialists.

Third, the functional autonomy of the UGC is compromised by the UGC Act. Recently, the commission tried to rationalise decisions on a number of issues, but it was not allowed to function autonomously or in a transparent and objective manner. For instance, government directions under Section 20 of the UGC Act reversed a number of UGC decisions, or were issued without regard for efficiency in the delivery of educational services — take the rollback of Delhi University’s four-year undergraduate programme, to which the UGC had already provided tacit support.

The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that the relevant laws governing the management and regulation of higher education and the manner in which these are implemented by the HRD ministry should also be reviewed to improve the responsiveness of higher education institutions to the society and economy. Unfortunately, the scope and coverage of the ToRs, as submitted to the review committee, is confined to operational areas of the UGC. Certain aspects of the role of the central bureaucracy have been ignored. Is this not an attempt to find a scapegoat in the UGC for the malfunctioning of higher education systems?

The HRD has constituted different committees, the reports of which have already been submitted to the government, with a view to creating separate regulatory authorities for open and distance education, and for carrying out accreditation of institutions and

amendments to the UGC Act. Yet these areas of concern have also been mentioned in the ToRs, which would lead to the duplication of efforts and waste of resources.

To conclude, in the context of today's knowledge economy and the globalisation of education, we ought to evolve a comprehensive approach to reform higher education systems so that they are more responsive to societal aspirations. The constitution of the review committee by the government does not meet such expectations.

[HINDU, AUG 27, 2014](#)

Teachers accuse Hindu College of wrongful appointments; Principal denies charge

A teacher in the History Department of *Hindu College* has alleged that around 23 teaching posts that are vacant in the college have been given out to guest lecturers close to the college administration, instead of using the UGC funds to appoint proper ad-hoc faculty.

Rooster system

The teacher also alleged that the rooster system for SC/ST appointments that was mandated by the UGC is not being followed.

“The college over admits students every year, and there is the creation of an artificial workload which forces the college to hire these guest lecturers. Also, there are more than the required number of guest lecturers that are hired,” alleged Ratan Lal, an associate professor in the college's History Department. All these claims were denied by the college administration.

“There were around 44 teaching positions that were sanctioned by the UGC in the 2007 OBC expansion scheme, out of these 21 have already been filled. The remaining 23 positions we have been using guest lecturers because we have not received the funds as yet. And, the rooster system is what is being mandated by the university,” said college principal Pradyum Kumar, adding that they were hiring only those teachers who met all the qualifications mandated by the UGC.

“We have been audited by the UGC and they have not found anything on us. As far as over admissions are concerned, every college in the university has over admissions. This is despite our college exercising every caution while declaring the cut-offs,” he added.

UGC guidelines

On an average, an assistant professor makes around Rs.50,000 per month. According to the UGC guidelines, a guest/part time teachers with the minimum qualifications for the post of an assistant professor should be paid Rs.1,000 a lecture, and can be paid up to a maximum of Rs.25,000 per month.

[DECCAN HERALD, AUG 27, 2014](#)

HRD Ministry suggests school safety norms

The Human Resource Development ministry on Tuesday suggested a set of guidelines, including issuing security identity cards and a separate database containing contact details to ensure safety of school children.

Proposing the guidelines at a meeting of state education secretaries here, the ministry asked the states to adopt the new guidelines and ensure schools under their control complied with them.

“The head of the institution should ensure issuing security identity card to all such students and maintain a separate database of personal details like guardian/ local guardian, home address, mobile, email, etc, of such students and the same is carried by the students on his person,” the ministry suggested.

The guidelines said schools should ensure study tours and excursions undertaken by students are relevant to their subjects, while stipulating that students should provide written consent from one of their parents or guardians of their participation in the excursion.

Undertaking

They should also submit an undertaking that they would abide by the rules during the excursion.

A senior lady teacher should accompany the touring party if girls are part of the excursion, while the school heads should hire a local tour operator familiar with the conditions if the number of students exceeds ten.

The guidelines also state that the school should write to the local authorities concerned if the excursion covers public places like dams, power plants, cities, beaches etc.

“The head of the institution should also certify in the form of an undertaking that the institute will provide all necessary help in case of emergency or otherwise to all such students who are part of the educational tour,” the ministry suggested.

TRIBUNE, AUG 28, 2014

UGC agrees to relook into implementation of CAS

Ananya Panda

The University Grants Commission (UGC) today assured a section of the Delhi University faculty to revisit favourably the issue of retrospective implementation of Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) in all faculty promotions with effect from December 31, 2008.

Even as the move, which came following protest by teachers under the banner of Academics for Action and Development outside the UGC office here, is seen as a step in the right direction by teachers the "lukewarm" response from the UGC over the matter of Contributory Provident Fund (CPF) to General Provident Fund (GPF)-cum-pension scheme has left them disappointed.

Also the fact that the relief recently granted by the single-bench of the Delhi High Court now stands stayed after the writ petition filed by DU administration was admitted by a double-bench yesterday has left the university faculty and staff disgruntled. The issues are slated for discussion during the next general body meeting of the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) on August 29.

"The court has given an opportunity to those affected on the pension issue to appeal by September 25 and the hearing is scheduled for September 30. The matter is the agenda of the DUTA for the next general body meeting on Friday," said Janmejoy Khuntia, chairman of Academics for Action and Development (AAD)-Rathi.

Pointing out that the university's stand has left thousands of employees in dark, chairperson of AAD Aditya Narayan Misra, said, "It is a regressive step and this will create misery for many who have retired or are nearing retirement as the university may issue a notification soon to all such families giving three months notice. Under pressure of the UGC- Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) the university has washed off its hands from the options given by it to the employees."

Regarding the pension issue Khuntia stressed that it is for the MHRD and the UGC to look for a humanitarian solution as so many families would be at the receiving end. "The university's budget is passed by the finance committee in which the MHRD and the UGC have nominees and if the pension fund has been released in their knowledge then it is for them to look for a solution. It is for the finance committee to declare that it is not unauthorised expenditure," he said.

AAD chairperson said, "The university has succumbed to the pressure of the UGC and the MHRD. It has withheld six merit cases of promotion and promotions have been denied by implementing the service conditions from backdate. The bullying approach of the UGC becomes quite clear in its communications to DU."

The AAD delegation argued for making due arrangements by the UGC to settle this issue once for all by granting one general chance to all affected employees to shift from CPF to GPF. However, Khuntia feels the decision has to be modified at the university level. "DU must stand by its autonomy," said AAD chief.

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 30, 2014

DU admission scam: A seat goes for Rs 5-10 lakh

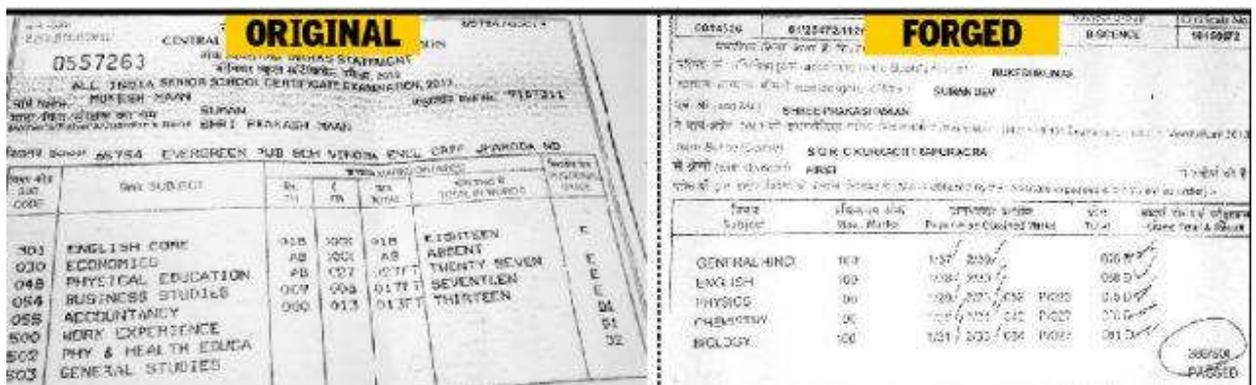
[Raj Shekhar Jha](#)

NEW DELHI: The crime branch of Delhi Police has detected a large-scale admission scam in some DU colleges of south campus. An initial probe, it is claimed, has found 10 fake admissions in Sri Venkateswara College this year and three last year. The cops have found that ARSD College, Dhaula Kuan, has also been targeted with one fake admission detected so far. This brings the number of such admissions to 14 and this could be just the tip of the iceberg.

Additional commissioner (crime) Ashok Chand said a team, led by ACP KPS Malhotra, has arrested three people in this connection. The kingpin has been identified as Arvind Yadav (28), a Hindu College graduate and a resident of Gurgaon, and the two others as Mukesh Maan (19) and Daya Ram (36) from Bulandshahr.

Maan is a second-year Venkateswara College student who had, according to the cops, got admission last year through fake documents and later became a member of the gang. Daya Ram was a teacher at a private school in Bulandshahr and joined the gang to make a fast buck. He arranged the forged documents for students, police said.

"These crooks used various forged certificates like marksheets, cast certificates, character and transfer certificates and physical disability certificates to facilitate admission. The colleges where these fake admissions have taken place have been asked to hand over the certificates and other documents of these students and these are being scrutinized," Chand said.



Mukesh Mann used forged marksheet to get admitted to Venkateswara College

Police said the gang demanded anything between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh for an admission, depending on the profile and chosen subject of the student. They guaranteed admissions in all courses.

DCP (crime) Bisham Singh said his team had received inputs about a suspect involved in fake admissions coming to Dwarka and a special team, comprising ACP Malhotra, inspector PC Yadav and others, laid a trap. "The man, identified as Arvind Yadav, was

apprehended while he was travelling in his Ford Endeavour. Forged documents and the forged stamp of a doctor of a government hospital were recovered from him. A case was registered at the crime branch and investigations launched," Singh said.

Yadav allegedly disclosed that he had set up a transport business after his graduation from a Delhi University college. "However, the earnings were not enough to fund his lavish lifestyle. Being a former DU student, he was aware of the loopholes in the admission process. He roped in Daya Ram to arrange for documents and certificates and began the racket," Chand said.

In 2013, Yadav allegedly got three students admitted on the basis of the forged documents in Venkateswara College. This included the admission of one of their present associate, Mukesh Maan. Yadav then led the crime branch team to Daya Ram and Maan. A laptop and a printer were recovered from them.

Their call records and phonebook are being scrutinized. All those who were in touch with the accused frequently will be asked to join the investigations. The college authorities are also going to be questioned, said the police. The contacts of Daya Ram who helped him forge documents and the ones who brought the candidates to the gang are yet to be caught.

"We first want to ascertain if any college official was involved in the racket. Ten admissions just this year is a large number to manage without any insider involvement it would seem. The fact that Maan managed to be in the college without any hassles and stayed till second year is intriguing," said a senior cop.

The principal of Venkateswara College, P Hemlata Reddy, told TOI: "We do not know whether (these are) fake admissions or not. The crime branch wants a few documents and we have provided them. The police will give further details."

HINDU, AUG 30, 2014

DUTA plans stir to demand Vice-Chancellor's removal

VIJETHA S.N.

Denied a venue to conduct their annual General Body Meeting for the third time in a row, members of the Delhi University Teachers' Association converged outside the Arts Faculty gates and resolved to go on a massive stir for the Vice-Chancellor's removal.

"All the gates leading into and outside the area where the Vice-Regal Lodge is situated were closed. We somehow managed to carry out the protest march till the V-C Lodge as we had planned," said DUTA member Saikat Ghosh.

The recent Executive Council meeting decision to deny pension to a large numbers of teachers appointed prior to January 1, 1986, as well as the decision to implement the

points-based promotion criteria retrospectively from 2008 instead of the date on which the ordinance was passed in August 17, 2013, has angered the teachers.

“The DUTA appreciates the letter sent by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to the University on August 25, 2014, wherein the University has been asked to reply, para-wise, on all complaints about ‘the alleged anomalies and irregularities in the functioning of the University’ listed in the DUTA’s representation,” said DUTA president Nandita Narain.

“The DUTA,” she said, “had submitted a 500-page White Paper to the Visitor, and appealed for a Visitorial Enquiry into all the charges, pending which the Vice-Chancellor must be removed from office. It has submitted a copy of the White Paper to the HRD Ministry and the Central Vigilance Commission as well.”

BUSINESS LINE, AUG 25, 2014

Standards of higher education institutes ‘abysmally low’: Pranab

Saddened by absence of Indian institutions in the list of 200 world class universities

President Pranab Mukherjee on Sunday expressed concern over the standards of higher education in the country.

According to him, standards of higher education institutes (in India) in comparison to international benchmarks are “abysmally low”.

This “saddens” him, especially when he sees there are 37,000 degree colleges, 11,000 diploma poly-technical institutes and 720 universities.

“It saddens me when I find that in the list of 200 world class universities a single Indian institution does not find place. Why? That is the question that haunts me,” Mukherjee said at the inauguration of the Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (formerly, Bengal Engineering and Science University), Shibpur

Nobel Laureates

While India had once dominated the world education scene with reputed institutions competing with one another, the situation has changed now.

After CV Raman, there have been Nobel Prize winners of Indian origin, but they won while working in institutes abroad. “What has happened to us?” he asked.

“My question is: why can’t we create that ambience and opportunity in Indian universities?”

“And that is the task we all have to do,” the President remarked.

The solution, according to the President, was greater collaboration between institutes, focus on research and innovation and better academia-industry collaboration.

Fake currency

Expressing concern over fake Indian currency notes, Mukherjee maintained that it was an irony that a country which could launch satellites into space, has to import the paper and ink to print its currency.

Such import of paper and ink exposes the country's security to "unscrupulous elements" who want to destroy the economy through fake currencies.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated August 25, 2014)

ELECTIONS

HINDU, AUG 26, 2014

The experiment succeeds

The latest round of by-elections to Assembly seats will be remembered for the success of a political experiment in Bihar involving the coming together of three parties against the Bharatiya Janata Party. The results significantly moderate the idea that the BJP is at an electorally invulnerable point in its history. The Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Janata Dal (United) and the Congress have together won six of the 10 seats that saw by-polls. The BJP with its allies had swept Bihar in the recent Lok Sabha election, bagging 31 of the 40 seats. It is not in itself a surprise that parties gain from tactical tie-ups that give them the arithmetical heft that their individual stature may not fetch. However, the three parties seemed to have done some strategic thinking in bringing together their combined vote base drawn from among Yadavs, other backward classes, Dalits and Muslims and successfully presented a 'grand secular alliance'. It has given room for these parties to claim it as a victory over 'divisive forces'. The takeaway from the combine's performance is that doubts whether it would work on the ground have been dispelled. These doubts arose because of the long history of political rivalry between JD(U) leader and former Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and RJD president Lalu Prasad. The BJP's State leadership has accepted responsibility for winning only four seats, lest it be seen as a reflection on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's performance at the Centre. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the BJP had beaten alliance arithmetic in the four seats it has won. The results indicate how the battle lines will be drawn when Assembly elections are held in Bihar in 2015.

Karnataka is another State where the Congress' performance will give the party considerable satisfaction, as it managed to wrest the Bellary Rural seat from the BJP with a handsome margin of over 33,000 votes. While retaining its seat at Chikkodi-Sadurga, the Congress managed to make inroads into Shikaripura, where former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa's son B.Y. Raghavendra managed to win with a relatively narrow margin of 6,430 votes. This should come as a boost for Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who faces some dissidence and is under pressure from several quarters for Cabinet posts. The BJP's performance in Madhya Pradesh, winning two out of three seats in this round, has been mixed. It retained one constituency, Agar, while wresting Vijaraghavgarh from the Congress. The Congress wrested the Bahoriband seat from its rival. In Punjab, the Akali Dal seems to have beaten back anti-incumbency sentiment to some extent by wresting the Talwandi Sabo seat from the Congress by a big margin. The Congress retained the Patiala Urban seat.

FINANCE

DECCAN HERALD, AUG 26, 2014

Expenditure reforms

The government has done well to set up an Expenditure Management Commission (EMC) under former Reserve Bank governor Bimal Jalan, following up on the announcement made by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his budget speech.

The minister had proposed that the Commission would help review the efficiencies of government expenditure both in terms of allocation and operation so that there can be maximum output for the amounts that are deployed as spending inputs. There was a proposal to set up an EMC during the 1990s and one was actually set up in 2000, called the expenditure reforms commission.

It submitted a series of reports on downsizing ministries and curtailing administrative expenditure. Not many proposals were implemented. The Commission, which has now been set up, is also aimed at expenditure reform. Its relevance is much greater now than 15 years ago because government expenditure has multiplied many times since then. Inefficiencies have also increased accordingly.

While India has seen many reforms in taxation, rationalisation of expenditure has generally been neglected. This is because political considerations have dominated spending decisions of all governments. But there is a greater need now to pay attention to sound norms of spending because the cost of mismanagement may be greater than in the past. A rupee saved is a rupee earned and a rupee productively spent is worth the spending, whatever the area of spending.

What is mainly expected from the panel is a set of recommendations for reducing food and fertiliser subsidies and to cut the fiscal deficit to safe levels. The quantum of subsidies has increased by more than five times to about Rs 2,30,000 crore in the last many years and a good part of it is inefficiently spent. Better fiscal responsibility has to be ensured and expenditures like the allocations for railways and capitalisation of public sector banks need to be looked at afresh.

Another major challenge will be on how to deal with the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission which has been appointed, and on how to compensate states moving to the goods and service tax regime. Implementation of the 14th Finance Commission proposals will also engage its attention.

These are all matters on which the government can take its own decisions but the Commission's recommendations might give the decisions a better footing. They are likely to be useful since the panel will need only to be guided by rational economic considerations.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

AUG 28, 2014

Bank accounts for all Indians will be a challenge

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has put a pledge to give bank accounts to all Indians on a war footing, but experts say taking banking to rural areas where many people have no identity papers will be a huge challenge.

Banking services in India leave out nearly half the 1.2 billion population, putting poor people at the mercy of moneylenders who charge usurious interest for emergency loans for sickness or routine purchases such as buying seeds.

"Why are our farmers committing suicide? It's because they have to take money at huge interest rates from the moneylenders," Modi declared in his first annual Independence Day speech.

Just 145 million of India's 247 million households have access to a bank account, census figures show. According to the World Bank, 73% of farmers have no formal source of credit.

Read: Modi's fine words must be followed by firm action

While the drive for universal banking access dates back decades, India is still far from its goal. Now Modi is taking a personal stake in the quest.

"We want to integrate the poorest of the poor with bank accounts," Modi said in his August 15 speech, remarking that while there has been a telecommunications revolution in India, there has been no similar banking revolution.

"There are millions of families who have mobile phones but no bank accounts. We have to change this scenario," said Modi, who aims to provide bank accounts to 75 million more households by 2018, and to have two account-holders per household.

"India is at a crossroads with a unique opportunity to re-invent its approach to financial inclusion," said Vijay Advani, executive vice-president of Franklin Templeton Investments.

Modi is pushing to transform India into a modern economy where money goes from account to account rather than pocket to pocket. Under his scheme, each account-holder would also get a debit card and a Rs.1,00,000 sickness insurance policy.

Lack of identity papers

But there are many hurdles to achieving Modi's goal, among them a lack of identity documents. Would-be bank customers have to produce a host of documents from birth certificates to residence proofs that many poor Indians do not possess.

"I'd like my own bank account but I have to use a friend's account to save -- I don't have the papers," said Pushpa Kumari, who runs an at-home Delhi manicure service.

Read: PM writes to bankers, says opening accounts for all 'national priority'

"For the common man, the opening of a bank account is a Herculean task," said NSN Reddy, chief manager of the state-run Andhra Bank.

Rajan has said banks would use "unique biometric identifiers", a programme launched by the previous UPA government.

Increasing the ranks of account-holders will also help India achieve its aim of transforming the subsidy and distribution scheme for food, fuel and fertiliser into cash payments.

World Bank data show just 4% of Indians get government payments through bank accounts. Analysts say boosting the rate would help prevent corrupt officials from diverting aid.

"The programme will lead to reduced leakages, better tax collection and improved savings" and ultimately boost economic growth, said Aditya Gupta, chief operating officer of TranServ, a firm that devises such payment schemes.

Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan has said the scheme will set the poor on the road to "economic independence", supplying insurance and providing credit to entrepreneurs.

The government and central bank will start by encouraging more ATMs and mobile banking, and will promote a new breed of "simple banks" focused on deposits and payments.

Read: Financial inclusion a national priority: Modi emails bankers

Right now, many of India's so-called "unbanked" store their savings by investing in gold jewelry and bars. Indians have one of the world's highest household savings rates, but the central bank says just 35% of these savings go into the banking system.

Microfinance institutions, which loan small sums to those unable to get credit from mainstream banks, have sought to step into the breach, but have been criticised for exorbitant lending rates.

Analysts say India's public and private banks, saddled with bad loans as a result of an economic slowdown, will need incentives and financial support to extend services in rural areas which they have so far found mainly unprofitable.

A lot depends on "how effectively the government is able to scale up participation from the private, public and social sectors," said Advani of Franklin Templeton Investments.

FLOODS

HINDU, AUG 29, 2014
Assam's annual sorrow

In a wide swath of northern and northeastern India, from Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, to Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, seasonal floods have eased following abatement of the flow from ice-melt in the upstream Himalayan belt. But in Assam, close to 15 lakh people still remain seriously affected as the Brahmaputra and its tributaries have inundated 16 districts. Even as relief and rehabilitation measures are undertaken on a war-footing to ameliorate the immediate suffering of more than 2.46 lakh people who are in relief camps, longer-term steps need to be taken up in earnest. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi's announcement of the State's decision to form a Flood and Erosion Protection Authority at a cost of Rs.1,000 crore to strengthen embankments and build anew those that have outlived their utility, has come not a day too soon. The Authority's remit will include undertaking long-term anti-erosion measures including dredging of the tributaries of the Brahmaputra to minimise the impact of floods. The State has also proposed the formation of a Brahmaputra Valley River Authority. These need to be implemented in a time-bound manner.

For Assam, not forgetting their beneficial aspects such as replenishing the soil, floods represent virtually an annual scourge, with their after-effects persisting even longer than elsewhere. According to the State's Economic Survey for 2013-14, it suffers an average loss of Rs.200 crore a year; the figure was an estimated Rs.771 crore in 2004. While the all-India figure for flood-prone areas is 10.2 per cent, as much as 39.58 per cent of Assam is classified as flood-prone. About 16.5 lakh hectares of the State's area is flood-protected, while 9.31 lakh ha remains vulnerable. The scale of the problem of erosion has only grown over time: an estimated 4.27 lakh ha has been washed away since 1950, at an average annual rate of 8,000 ha. The Brahmaputra and the Barak, along with their 48 major tributaries and innumerable sub-tributaries, have periodically claimed roads, bridges, buildings and communication infrastructure, besides livestock, crops and so on. According to the State government's assessment, the life-span of 75 per cent of the embankments, running to a length of 4,474 km, has expired. The Water Resources Department has submitted a proposal to the Centre to strengthen these stretches. The application of space-based tools for project-planning, the use of geo-synthetic materials for flood management structures, and optimal dredging activity in the rivers are some of the steps that have been suggested by experts. It is clear that unless innovative flood management strategies are quickly implemented, Assam's development will be blighted.

GOVERNORS

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 25, 2014

Gujarat Governor O P Kohli takes oath as Maharashtra Governor

Kohli has been asked to take additional charge of the post of Governor of Maharashtra by a Presidential notification dated August 23, 2014.

MUMBAI: [Gujarat](#) Governor Om Prakash Kohli was today sworn in as the Governor of Maharashtra following resignation of his counterpart [K Sankaranarayanan](#) after the latter was transferred to Mizoram by the government.

In a brief ceremony held at Raj Bhavan tonight, Kohli took the additional charge as Governor of Maharashtra.

Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court Justice Mohit Shah administered him the oath of the office, while Chief Secretary Swadhin Kshatriya read out the warrant of Kohli's appointment, issued by the President.

Kohli's wife Avinash, outgoing governor K Sankaranarayanan and his wife Radha, Chief Minister [Prithviraj Chavan](#), Deputy Chief Minister [Ajit Pawar](#), Speaker of state legislative Assembly Dilip Walse Patil, minister for protocol Suresh Shetty and senior government officials were present on the occasion.

Before the swearing-in ceremony, Sankaranarayanan, who submitted his resignation from the post to the President, was given the ceremonial Guard of Honour by the Indian Navy at the Raj Bhavan.

Kohli has been asked to take additional charge of the post of Governor of Maharashtra by a Presidential notification dated August 23, 2014.

Kohli (79) is a MA (Hindi) from University of Delhi and has worked as a lecturer at Hansraj College and Deshbandhu College (University of Delhi) for over 37 years. He was the president of Delhi University's Teachers Association (DUTA) from 1973-79 and an elected member of the Academic and Executive Councils of the University.

Kohli was the president of National Democratic Teacher's Front (NDTF), an organisation of university teachers.

He was the member of Rajya Sabha (1994-2000) and held organisational responsibilities in BJP for several years.

HINDU, AUG 29, 2014

Manipur Governor Duggal resigns

Vinod Kumar Duggal on Thursday resigned as Manipur Governor, becoming the ninth Governor appointed by the UPA regime to quit since the NDA government came to power in May this year. Mr. Duggal arrived here and called on President Pranab Mukherjee where he handed over the resignation.

HINDU, AUG 27, 2014

New Governors for 4 States

DEVESH K. PANDEY

President Pranab Mukherjee appointed Kalyan Singh, Vajubhai Rudabhai Vala, Ch. Vidyasagar Rao and Mridula Sinha Governors of Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa, respectively, on Tuesday.

The President accepted the resignation of K. Sankaranarayanan, who quit as Maharashtra Governor on Sunday after being abruptly transferred to Mizoram. Manipur Governor Vinod Kumar Duggal will continue to hold charge of Mizoram.

Kerala Governor Sheila Dikshit, meanwhile, joined the list of Governors appointed by the previous United Progressive Alliance government to resign. Mr. Kalyan Singh, a former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, had given indications that the Centre had offered him a gubernatorial post.

Mr. Vala was elected Speaker of the Gujarat Assembly in 2013. He had held the Finance portfolio in the Gujarat Ministry.

Mr. Rao, a lawyer, had served as Union Minister of State for Internal Affairs in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. He was elected to the 12th and 13th Lok Sabhas from the Karimnagar constituency (now in Telangana) as a BJP candidate. He had been elected to the Andhra Pradesh Assembly thrice. Former BJP Mahila Morcha president Mridula Sinha, a renowned writer, had been the Chairperson of the Central Board of Social Welfare.

HEALTH SERVICES

HINDU, AUG 30, 2014

Now, all senior citizens can visit CGHS wellness centres for free consultation

**CGHS WELLNESS CENTRES
OPENED TO ALL SENIOR CITIZENS**

Pusa Road	Sahibabad
Darya Ganj	Kalkaji II
Chandani Chowk	Vasant Kunj
Vasant Vihar	Kasturba Nagar II
Sarojini Nagar L Block	Sarita Vihar
Sarojini Nagar S Y Block	Rajpur Road
Jangpura	Noida Sector - 82
Chanakyapuri	Gurgaon Sector - 55
Pandara Road	Kali Bari
Geater Noida	Mayur Vihar



Services available on all working days from September 1

In order to improve the lot of senior citizens in Delhi, the doors of 20 Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) wellness centres will be thrown open to them for free consultation from September 1.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday announced this plan that would have a major impact on public health.

Unveiling a pilot project here, Dr. Vardhan, who has earlier served as Delhi Health Minister, said depending on how much demand would be there for the CGHS clinics and their ability to handle the demand from the general public, the scheme would be extended to more people in more cities.

Closed door policy

He acknowledged that earlier there had been wide criticism of the closed door policy of the CGHS towards people in need of medical help who were not family members of the Central government employees and so the need was felt to open the wellness centres for all senior citizens. The services for senior citizens would be available on all working days from 1-30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

However, it would not entail supply of free medicines, which would still only be for the Central employees.

To streamline the functioning of the CGHS that plays a critical role in healthcare in Delhi as the city houses a large number of Central Government servants, Dr. Vardhan had announced a complete review of its functioning. Three months on, the CGHS has completed a thorough review of its operations with the intention of identifying vulnerable spots which often offer scope for corruption. The Minister has ordered that all information on medical claims that remain pending for more than 30 days be put on the website: <http://msotransparent.nic.in/cghsnew/index.asp>. This is intended to address the issue of opaqueness in the process of reimbursing claims.

Since there were also complaints of CGHS doctors prescribing branded drugs beyond the approved list, it has now been decided that all 1,447 generic and 622 branded medicines will be prescribed. Information on all these medicines would also be available on the CGHS website.

Exceptions on drugs

However, exceptions on drugs would be made for patients suffering from cancer and similar diseases. This apart, it has been decided that CGHS beneficiaries would be provided with medicines for a maximum of one month and in case they are travelling abroad, medicines would be provided for three months, Dr. Vardhan said.

INDUSTRY

TELEGRAPH, AUG 26, 2014

Coal allotments over 17 years illegal: SC

**Order covers NDA and UPA decisions, fate of 153 blocks uncertain
court reserves decision till hearing next week**

R. BALAJI

New Delhi, Aug. 25: The Supreme Court today declared as “arbitrary and illegal” the allocation of 153 coal blocks by the Centre between 1993 and 2010 — nearly two decades that straddle the NDA and the UPA regimes.

But the court has not yet decided to cancel the allocations. The final decision will be taken after hearing out the parties concerned on September 1.

In a related ruling, the apex court has said state-level public sector units can neither undertake commercial mining nor enter into joint ventures for mining. ()

In Bengal, the fate of some steel and power projects — which are far from fruition — could be affected if the court decides to cancel the allocation of non-operational coal blocks.

The court refrained from interfering with the allocations made to 20 ultra mega projects as they were auctioned off and not challenged by the petitioners. But the projects have been restrained from diverting coal for commercial exploitation.

The apex court termed the allocation process illegal not because the coal blocks were not auctioned but because they were farmed out in an arbitrary manner without any criterion and without following many of the established procedures.

The court did not go into whether auctions should have been held or not — a larger bench has already clarified that competitive bidding does not have the status of a constitutional principle but the mode of allocation is the policy prerogative of the executive. However, in the last days of UPA II a switch towards auction-based allocation had begun.

Among the 153 coal blocks marked out today, only around 30 are said to be in operation, accounting for around 0.4 per cent of the total output of 565 million tonnes in the country in 2013.

Originally, 194 coal blocks were under the scanner, of which the UPA on its own had de-allotted 41, leaving 153 with the court. Of the original 194 blocks, as many as 121 were allotted to state-level public sector units while the remaining 73 were given to private players.

A three-judge bench of Chief Justice R.M. Lodha and Justices Madan B. Lokur and Kurien Joseph today stopped short of cancelling the allocations, saying “what should be

the consequences is the issue which remains to be tackled”. This hearing will be held next Monday.

In 2012, another bench of the apex court had cancelled 122 telecom licences in the 2G scandal, a ruling that had triggered a debate. The coal ruling comes at a time a fresh debate is going on about the judges’ appointment bills in which the court today refused to intervene as the act has not yet been cleared by the President. ()

Today’s coal judgment was delivered on two PILs filed by advocate Manohar Lal Sharma and an NGO, Common Cause, who relied on a CAG report that had estimated a Rs 1.75-lakh-crore loss to the exchequer on account of the arbitrary allocations.

The allocations were made by screening committees and through the “government dispensation route” (administrative order).

The court said: “The entire allocation suffers from the vice of arbitrariness and legal flaws. The screening committee has never been consistent, it has not been transparent, there is no proper application of mind, it has acted on no material in many cases, relevant factors have seldom been its guiding factors, there was no transparency and guidelines have seldom guided it.”

The court added: “There was no fair and transparent procedure, all resulting in unfair distribution of the national wealth.”

“Common good and public interest have, thus, suffered heavily. Hence, the allocation of coal blocks... is illegal,” said Chief Justice Lodha, writing the judgment.

The bench noted that most of the companies that had been allocated coal blocks were not engaged in producing steel, power or cement at the time of allotment. They only stated that they proposed to set up such plants. Thus, the requirement of end-use was not met at the time of allocation.

The court listed the following lacunae while the allocations were made:

Non-compliance with the mandatory legal procedure under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act

Breach of a section of the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act

Violation of the principle of trusteeship of natural resources by gifting away precious resources as largesse

Arbitrariness, lack of transparency, lack of objectivity and non-application of mind

Allotment tainted with corruption and made in favour of ineligible companies as raised in the two PILs.

The court flayed the “pick-and-choose” policy. “The policy of pick and choose was adopted. The application of norms was changed from meeting to meeting with no uniform or consistent consideration. Certain companies which did not come for presentation were also considered but how and in what manner the applications of those companies were considered is not discernible. Why the chosen companies have been preferred over the others is also not discernible.”

“Some of the companies which had no recommendation by the state government were recommended by the screening committee,” the court added. “The minutes of the 33rd and 34th meeting even do not note the particulars of the applicants individually.”

JUDICIARY

HINDU, AUG 26, 2014

Don't close the door on NJAC as yet

T.R. ANDHYARUJINA

The argument that the independence of the judiciary is jeopardised by the creation of a National Judicial Appointments Commission is superficial

give it time: There are many shortcomings in the Judicial Appointments Commission as formulated in the statute, but much will depend on how it will function in practice. Picture shows lawyers at the Madras High Court.— Photo: V. Ganesan

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha have passed the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014 (NJAC Act), and the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, to give constitutional status to the National Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) to appoint judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts. Rarely has a legislation of such importance been approved by the two Houses of Parliament unanimously. This is the clearest endorsement of consensus of public opinion in the country: that the judicially created collegium system of appointing judges requires replacement by a new system of appointment.

The JAC is to be composed of six members — the ex-officio Chief Justice of India, two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, the Law Minister, and two “eminent persons” nominated by a committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of the Opposition. There is nothing to suggest that the two “eminent persons” will be the nominees of the government.

Speculative assumption

Critics have faulted the new JAC principally on the ground that the three judicial members of the commission will not have a predominant vote in the selection of a judge. They criticise the provision in the NJAC Act which states that the JAC cannot recommend a person for appointment as a judge if any two members of the commission do not agree for such a recommendation. It is suggested that this provision takes away the power of the three ex-officio judges of the Supreme Court to recommend a judge, and gives a veto to two non-judicial members. This is a speculative assumption to condemn the new system. The judicial members may themselves be the opposing two members of the recommendation made by others, which would allow the views of the judicial members to prevail. If the basis of the new legislation is to take away the supremacy of the previous collegium to appoint judges, there surely cannot be a provision in the new law to retain that power by giving a decisive vote to the judicial members of the commission.

The government was anxious to avoid an impression that it would overrule the commission. The JAC Bill was therefore amended in the course of the debate in the Lok Sabha to delete the requirement of a unanimous reiteration by the commission if the President required it to reconsider its recommendation. Thereby, the Bill took away the

power of the President or the executive to overrule the recommendation of the JAC, which was not unanimous.

The insistence that the judicial members of the commission must have the predominant vote in the commission is founded on a theory that the judiciary must have the right to appoint judges. This is not the constitutional requirement in any jurisdiction. The U.K. Judicial Appointments Commission, a body doing excellent work, consists of 15 members: two from the legal profession, five judges, one tribunal member, one lay justice (magistrate), and six lay people including the Chairman. One of the chairpersons was, till recently, a lay person of Indian origin, Baroness Usha Prashar. There is no predominance of judges in the U.K. Commission.

Superficial argument

The argument that the independence of the judiciary is jeopardised by the creation of a JAC is superficial. Even prior to the collegium system, for over 23 years, judges of the Supreme Court, including some outstanding judges, were appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice of India and other judges of the Court. It was only during the Emergency period that this system was misused by the government, which led to the judgment in the Second Judges Act in 1993. In Australia and Canada, judicial appointments of the superior courts are made by the executive after wide consultation, including with the judiciary. There is therefore no basis for the theory that the judiciary must always have a controlling voice in judicial appointments to secure judicial independence.

The JAC will become functional only after a long time. The Constitutional (99th Amendment) Act has to be ratified first by half the States which will take several months. A permanent secretariat to back up the functioning of the JAC has to be created. Regulations have to be formulated for its functioning, particularly for the criteria of suitability for judicial appointments. There are many shortcomings in the JAC as formulated in the statute, but much will depend on how it will function in practice. The collegium system was allowed to function for over 20 years before its unsatisfactory working was acknowledged, even by judges. Instead of condemning the JAC straightaway on the recondite theory of it prejudicing judicial independence, and on the speculation of judicial members of the commission being side-tracked and outvoted by two non-judicial members, why can't the commission be allowed to function for sometime so it can reveal its merits? As Justice Powell of the U.S. Supreme Court said, "Democratic institutions are weakened and confidence in the Court is impaired when we appear unnecessarily to decide sensitive issues at the very time they are under consideration within a prescribed constitutional process." Already petitions have been filed against the JAC in the Supreme Court, and eminent lawyers have said they will move the Court to declare the commission illegal. Whether they will succeed or not, it is unfortunate that such a challenge in the Court will throw the system of appointing judges in a cloud of uncertainty. There is no basis for the theory that the judiciary must always have a controlling voice in judicial appointments

LABOUR

HINDU, AUG 29, 2014

Higher minimum PF pension from Sept. 1

The minimum monthly pension of Rs. 1,000 and a higher wage ceiling of Rs. 15,000 for social security schemes run by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation will be implemented from September 1. It will benefit 28 lakh pensioners. The government has raised the maximum sum assured under the Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme to Rs. 3 lakh.

This means in case an EPFO subscriber dies, his family will be entitled to sum assured of Rs 3.6 lakh instead of existing Rs 1.56 lakh.

LAW

STATESMAN, AUG 28, 2014

PM sets up panel to review obsolete laws

The Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, today approved the constitution of a committee that would review, identify and recommend amendment in obsolete laws to further smoothen and simplify the governance.

While the secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr R Ramanujam, would chair the committee, Mr V K Bhasin, former secretary of the legislative department, would be another member of the committee, said a senior PMO official. The committee has been asked to submit its report within three months, so that a comprehensive Bill can be introduced in the winter session of Parliament, based on its recommendations. The Prime Minister has also expressed concern that out of the 1382 Acts recommended for repeal by that committee, only 415 have been repealed so far.

Mr Modi called for a focused and result-oriented exercise to systematically weed out archaic laws and rules. "The committee will also examine Acts and Rules which may have become obsolete within the last 10 to 15 years," the PMP official said.

LIBRARIES

TIMES OF INDIA, AUG 30, 2014

Patna University library hums with students, again

B K Mishra



PATNA: The 92-year-old Patna University Central Library that has been used as a 'rain basera' (night shelter) by students for almost a decade, is limping back to normalcy.

The number of visitors to the library for academic purpose has increased as its working hours has been reduced from 24 hours to 10 hours (9am to 7pm) on working days. Besides, no one is allowed to stay on the library premises beyond the working hours, said PU library chief S R Padmadeo.

Earlier, students used to bring their own books to read. Some of them also entered the library with bed rolls and slept there comfortably at night. So, the PU authorities intervened and recently posted as many as 11 security staff to check the entry of 'outsiders' inside the library, said the librarian.

The library owns more than three lakh books and old volumes of journals in different subjects. Latest edition of textbooks worth Rs 4 lakh have been purchased recently with financial assistance from the UGC. The manuscripts section of the library (1530 in Persian, 440 in Urdu, 316 in Arabic, and 2547 in Sanskrit, Maithili and Hindi) was once considered to be a repository of rich cultural heritage and was visited by a large number of scholars of history, literature and Indology. However, it has been lying virtually defunct for the last two to three decades. Many of the manuscripts have already been eaten by termites as they are kept wrapped in cloths.

The library chief, however, pointed out that the process of digitalization and preservation of rare and valuable manuscripts lying in the library is in progress and the manuscripts would be made available to the scholars once the process is completed.

POLITICAL PARTIES

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 30, 2014

EC new transparency guidelines for parties

The Election Commission on Friday notified new guidelines making it mandatory for political parties to deposit their funds in banks and not to exceed ceiling limits in financial assistance for candidates to ensure transparency and accountability.

The new guidelines issued under Article 324 of the Constitution through which EC derives its powers also makes it mandatory for the parties to maintain accounts at all levels — national, state and lower level.

The guidelines also say that the accounts maintained by the treasurer shall conform to the guidance note on accounting and auditing of political parties issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants. The annual accounts shall be audited and certified by the qualified by certified chartered accountants as required under the Income Tax Act.

Under the guidelines, a party should ensure that no payment in excess of Rs. 20,000 is made to any person or company in cash, except in a village or in town not served by a bank.

Also it will not apply to payments made to any employee or party functionary towards salary, pension or reimbursement of expenses or where cash payment is required under any statute.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

HINDUSTAN TIMES, AUG 28, 2014

Govt puts up 'idea boxes' seeking good suggestions

In its quest to seek out-of-the-box solutions to governance-related matters, the government has put up 'idea boxes' inside the power corridors of North Block which houses the ministries of personnel and home affairs among others.

These wooden boxes mentioning 'idea box' and 'vichar petika' have been installed at prominent places in the North Block by the department of personnel and training (DoPT), inviting ideas from officials and visitors.

"There are suggestion boxes at government offices but they have not received the desired response. This innovative measure of 'idea boxes' will encourage people to drop in any suggestion they may have on governance-related matters. All suggestions received through 'idea boxes' will be promptly looked into," a senior DoPT official said.

The idea boxes have been installed on the ground, first and second floors of the North Block, he said.

The 'idea boxes' have been installed to seek innovative ideas especially from the employees to improve the functioning of the department and to create a conducive work culture, the official said.

The DoPT has also come out with a series of initiatives to boost the morale of its employees. The measures include giving certificate of excellence and selecting employee of the month to honour good work done by employees, training of the employees with specific focus on department related functions, appointment of grievance redressal officers and open house interaction with the minister and senior officials.

The DoPT has written to other ministries and departments to consider adopting these new measures as a human resource management tool to motivate industrious employees.

The central government has also started a website (www.mygov.nic.in) to ensure good governance with people's participation. People can give suggestions on various new initiatives taken by the government including 'clean Ganga' and 'digital India'.

STATESMAN, AUG 28, 2014

Onus of disqualifying tainted ministers on PM, rules SC

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court today dismissed a petition seeking the removal of persons with alleged criminal background as ministers at the Centre or states even while putting the onus on the Prime Minister to decide on this issue.

A five-member Bench felt that corrupt politicians should not be a part of the Cabinet but left the responsibility of deciding it on the PM. "We leave it to the wisdom of the PM

whether to appoint people with criminal background or not,” SC said in its order while dismissing the petition filed by one Manoj Narula, who had sought direction against criminalisation of politics.

Putting the onus firmly on the PM and CMs, the SC said, “Appointment of Cabinet ministers with criminal past must be left to the wisdom of PM... PM and CMs should not include people with criminal antecedents in their Cabinet.” The five-member Constitution Bench was headed by the CJI RM Lodha, and included Justices Dipak Misra, Madan B Lokur, Kurian Joseph and SA Bobde. “Indian Constitution reposes immense trust in PM and CMs and they are expected to act with responsibility and with constitutional morality,” the highest court ruled. The Constitution Bench said though no disqualification could be added to Article 75 (1) of the Constitution that empowers the PM to make anyone a minister, a person in conflict with law should not be entrusted with executive responsibilities. “Those in conflict with law and involved in offences of moral turpitude and corruption should not be allowed to discharge duty as ministers,” the Bench said. While all five judges stood by the verdict, Justice Kurian and Justice Lokur strongly insisted that if a person with dubious integrity is barred from civil services, leaders with criminal background should also be barred.

PRIME MINISTERS

ECONOMIC TIMES, AUG 25, 2014

Nripendra Mishra issues dos and don'ts on how to use the PM's pics for government ads

By Rajesh Ramachandran

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi doesn't want even Cabinet ministers to select his pictures that appear in government advertisements. PM's principal secretary, Nripendra Mishra, issued a circular to all secretaries of the Government of India on August 9 listing out dos and don'ts on how to use the PM's photograph.

A copy of the final advertisement carrying the PM's picture was always sent to the PMO for approval. After approval, the PM . used to send the advertisement to the Directorate of Advertising And Visual Publicity, which in turn released the advertisement to newspapers. But this was a mere formality and the Prime Minister's Office did not have any role in selecting pictures or changing the content.

All this would change. Unlike the practice of sending the final copy to the PMO, Mishra has asked for three options from all ministries. "All ministries/departments are requested to furnish at least three different options (layouts) for approval, so that a reasonable choice can be made among available alternatives," wrote Mishra.

This has to reach the PMO, at least, five working days before the scheduled date of publication. Also, the PMO wants the content "to convey a clear message to the target audience... be appealing to the reader, and be informative." Nripendra Mishra says that careful thought should be given to the language-mix adopted for the advertisement, keeping in mind the audience and the states targeted.

All government advertisements, henceforth, will have the website address of the department making the appeal at the bottom of the ad. The PMO has reiterated the need to pay, "special attention to the use of the social media to publicise government schemes.. Mishra has asked all ministries to ensure that they select the media, that is, newspapers and other publications, based on these criteria. Obviously, the clear hint is that the ministries have been issuing advertisements without much attention to details like content, target and language and the choice of the media.

The new set of instructions may put an end to old practice of ministers and bureaucrats patronising obscure publications, which mysteriously manage to ensure government advertisement without subscription or circulation base.

PROHIBITION

HINDU, AUG 27, 2014

U.N. health agency urges crackdown on e-cigarettes

Governments should have tougher rules for electronic cigarettes, banning their use indoors and putting them off limits for minors until more evidence can be gathered about their risks, the U.N. health agency said on Tuesday.

In a bid to set public policy, the World Health Organization said the popular nicotine-vapour products, particularly the fruit, candy and alcohol-drink flavours, could serve as gateway addictions for children and adolescents.

It recommended governments forbid or keep to a minimum any advertising, promotion or sponsorship in a market that has mushroomed to \$3 billion last year and now includes 466 different brands.

In a report, the Geneva-based agency found that the boom in e-cigarettes presents a public health dilemma.

Regulation “is a necessary precondition for establishing a scientific basis on which to judge the effects of their use, and for ensuring that adequate research is conducted and the public health is protected and people made aware of the potential risks and benefits,” the report said.

The report, requested in 2012 by the 179-nation WHO treaty for controlling tobacco, is to be discussed at a conference in Moscow in October. If the recommendations are adopted, the next step would be for nations to strengthen their laws and policies to meet the treaty obligations.

Little is known about the health effects of e-cigarettes, which have been sold in the U.S. since 2007, and contain less toxic substances than traditional cigarettes do. — **AP**

STATESMAN, AUG 25, 014

Kerala’s prohibition peril

Avinash Chandran Tharoor

Last week, the government of Kerala outlined its intention to make the state "liquor free" by closing bars, implementing alcohol-free days, and restricting sale to 'five-star' hotels and traditional toddy shops. The end goal, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy claims, is to implement "total prohibition" by 2024. Kerala is enduring a growing rate of alcohol abuse, with thousands of alcohol-related road deaths annually, and over-filled hospitals treating patients with alcohol-related diseases.

Additionally, Kerala has the highest per capita consumption rate in the country; in 2011, a study reported

that Keralites ~ on average ~ drink 11 litres of alcohol per year, more than double India's national average (4.3 litres). It is undeniable that the harm caused by alcohol in Kerala needs to be urgently addressed; however, prohibition tends to produce more problems than those that it is meant to solve.

Kerala's lawmakers need look no further than Prohibition in the United States in 1920. The law was repealed just 13 years after its enactment due to numerous disastrous consequences that resulted from pushing the trade into the black market. Notably, prohibition led to increased corruption among police and politicians, thousands of deaths attributed to unregulated alcohol, and the expansion and empowerment of the Mafia. Similarly, in Kerala, criminal syndicates ~ who currently make their money by means of extortion, trafficking drugs, and other illegal activities ~ will soon be able to monopolise the multi-crore trade of Kerala's most popular drug: alcohol. The unintended but unavoidable reallocation of these funds to criminal enterprise rather than the public sector will be one of the most devastating effects of prohibition. The state government collects around 8,000 crore rupees (US \$1.3bn) annually ~ 22% of Kerala's total tax revenue ~ from alcohol tax, some of which has been allocated to rehabilitation and medical treatment for alcoholics. Once the Chief Minister's dream of "total prohibition" becomes reality, this revenue will instead be directed to the pockets of dangerous criminals and corrupt officials.

The battle between Kerala's legislators and alcohol businesses has actually been ongoing for several months. A significant concern among business owners is that the law is discriminatory ~ as wealthier bar-owners who can reach the government's high standards may continue business as usual for the time being. Saji Cyriac was a partner of the Sea Blue Bar in Kochi until 31 March, when his liquor licence and that of 417 other Kerala bars were denied renewal by the state government. "The government shut us down because we cannot reach five-star standards," Cyriac explained. "A person who drinks won't stop because the bars are shut. He'll drink anyway. Now, people who want two or three pegs will have to buy a big bottle. This will only increase addiction." K A Janakan, the manager of a small Kochi toddy shop, directly accused the government of bias; "this law means that middle-class and poor people cannot legally buy liquor, but rich people from higher society can," he said. The policy seeks to eradicate an entire industry. "The government policy is wrong," Mr Janakan lamented, "There is already so much unemployment. The government should have thought of how to help employees after the bars closed."

However, this law is not without its advocates. A customer at Mr Janakan's toddy shop, who didn't wish to give his name, commended the government ~ as long as toddy remained exempt. "[Prohibition] is a good thing," he exclaimed, "drinking used to be about social bonding. Now liquor is available for everything, to drink every day. Toddy shops still have traditional values; they are a place to talk and chat. Bars run on a business

basis, they make alcohol available for young people ~ toddy shops don't do that." The wide availability and low prices of alcohol appear to be contributory factors to the prevalence of alcohol abuse in Kerala; however, the War on Drugs has shown that banning something does not stop its use ~ it only drives the trade underground. As with discourse around the drug war, discussion of Kerala's alcohol laws have been marred by subjective views of what is moral and traditional, rather than an objective analysis of the legislation's potential consequences.

"The law is justified because nothing good comes from alcohol," the patron said, before pouring himself another glass of toddy.

The writer (@AvinashTharoor) is an international public policy student and editor of The Prohibition Post.

RAILWAYS

BUSINESS STANDARD, AUG 25, 2014

Railways to install work stations in Rajdhani trains South-bound trains to be first to have them

Rajdhani travellers can soon look forward to some getaway moments during their journey as the [Railways](#) has finalised plans to install work stations fitted with office electronics in its premier train service.

Work stations equipped with laptop, printer, [fax](#) machine and [Internet](#) facility will be set up in a Rajdhani train on a pilot basis soon, said a senior Railway Ministry official. As per the plan, a cubicle will be carved out in the pantry car for the [work station](#) and passengers can avail the facility by paying a fee.

“To begin with, work station will be made operational at the pantry car and depending upon the response we will work out a permanent place for it,” he said. The official, however, said fee structure for the service has not been decided yet. “Modalities are being worked out and the fee will be on hourly basis,” he said.

He said a long distance south-bound Rajdhani train is likely to be selected for the pilot project. The aim is to cater to the requirement of business and leisure travellers. “While the work station is expected to add best value to business travellers, it can also be utilised by leisure travellers who can use the facility for entertainment purpose too,” the official said.

Besides Rajdhani trains, preparations are afoot to convert the entire coach as “office on wheel” as promised in the Rail Budget 2014-15. The concept of “office on wheel” will be executed on Shatabdi trains and three routes have been short listed for the purpose.

According to the official, premier services running between Delhi-Chandigarh, Delhi-Kanpur and Chennai-Bangalore will have exclusive coaches with "office on wheel" facility.

Internet facility, better and comfortable seating and catering arrangements will be provided in the specially designed coaches, he added.